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MIKE SHAYNE

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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by **BRETT HALLIDAY**

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MIKE SHAYNE



MYSTERY MAGAZINE

JUNE, 1969

VOL. 25, NO. 1

NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

THE NIGHT WAS MADE FOR MURDER

by BRETT HALLIDAY

Had she escaped from her nightmare hell—only to find she had killed the one thing she loved? Only Mike Shayne dared probe into the tortured lost night of the girl who had spent a night with her lover—only to find that his name was Murder!

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Battered, dazed, she waited for her lover----the man they said she had killed. Only Fate and a ganglord's word could clear her -- and only Mike Shayne could save her from the death rap which was her doom.



THE NIGHT WAS MADE FOR MURDER

by **BRETT HALLIDAY**



The New Complete MIKE SHAYNE Short Novel

MICHAEL SHAYNE ordered his second sidecar and grinned at Lucy Hamilton across the table in Mario's Italian Restaurant. His pert, brown-eyed secretary frowned in mock disapproval.

"Two before dinner, Michael? I'm not at all sure I approve," Lucy said.

"Break down, Angel. This is a celebration. A good job finished and the check in the bank. I'm free for at least a few days."

"Well," Lucy Hamilton said, and smiled like a conspirator, "all right, you can order me a second, too. I'll live dangerously."

Shayne ordered Lucy's second before-dinner cocktail, and sat back in his chair in the elegant, but quiet

restaurant. He felt relaxed and expansive. The job he had just finished had been a big one with a fat check at the end. Mario's was one of his favorite restaurants, and about the best place to get a sidecar in all of Miami.

"Since you're rich, momentarily," Lucy said, "I think I'll have the *tournedos rossini*."

"Nothing's too good for you, Angel. Pick the wine. You know me, I can't tell red from white. Not that I think anyone else can, either. Wine phonies."

"You don't know that, Michael."

Shayne shrugged, "Shooting my mouth off, Angel, but you choose a wine anyway—red and strong."

Shayne waved for the waiter again, just as a woman began to shout.

Her voice echoed through the quiet restaurant with the kind of shock you get when a child suddenly speaks loudly in a church. Angry, shouting, and yet Shayne heard in her voice an undercurrent of something else. A kind of despair, and more than a little fear.

"...I tell you I have to know what happened! You hear me? Tell me what happened! Where did we go?"

Shayne located the woman. She stood at the far end of the long bar in the cocktail lounge section of the restaurant. Not a woman at all, a girl—dark, long hair, a pale, pretty face; an expensive green suit of some light material that was both out of place at night, and creased and wrinkled as if she had slept in it.

She was shouting at Mario himself, the short, swarthy owner of the restaurant. Mario's stunned face stared at the girl. Then the girl seemed to almost claw at Mario, and the owner fell back a step. He made a sharp motion with his arm.

A waiter and a man Shayne knew was the bouncer appeared at the signal. They grabbed the girl and began to hustle her to the door.

She screamed in rage and something close to anguish. The bouncer clamped his hand over her mouth, and with the waiter pushed her along the aisle while the drinking customers sat and watched.

"Michael," Lucy said, "that girl needs help."

Shayne groaned. "Mario's not hurting her, Angel. She's probably drunk."

"No, I don't mean that. Look at her eyes. She's terrified, Michael."

Shayne sighed and got up. When he reached the girl, the bouncer had just gotten her to the door. Mario himself was walking behind, mopping his face and mumbling apologies to his customers.

"What's wrong, Mario?" Shayne asked, eyeing the girl. This close he realized that he had been wrong; she wasn't drunk at all.

"It's okay, Mr. Shayne. Just a little trouble. She's crazy, this girl. We don't hurt her, but—"

The girl broke loose, grabbed Shayne by the arm. "Make him tell me! He won't tell me! Help me, please!"

"Let her go, Mario," Shayne said, as they grabbed her again.

The bouncer glared at Shayne. The waiter dropped his grip on the girl, but the bouncer hung on.

Mario spoke sharply: "Cando! Let her go. Mr. Shayne will handle her."

The bouncer let go reluctantly. Like all of his breed, he hated to be cheated of his chance to throw someone out. The girl cowered close to Shayne. For the first time the redhead saw the stains on her green suit. They looked like blood.

"What's the blood?" Shayne said.

"I—I don't know," the girl stammered.

Mario said, sweating, "We didn't touch her, Mr. Shayne. She come in like a crazy woman, shouting about last night."

"You're the detective, Shayne," the bouncer cried. "You detect it out."

The girl looked up at Shayne. "A detective? Police?"

"Private," Shayne said. "Are you in some trouble, miss?"

She blinked, bit her lip, and seemed to fall into pieces in an instant. Her voice was a whisper, "Yes, I'm in trouble. Yes."

"Okay, let's talk. Lucy!"

Lucy Hamilton hurried up and supported the girl. Shayne nodded to Mario. "We'll use your office. Okay, Mario?"

"Sure, sure, that's fine. Take her in."

Lucy helped the girl into Mario's private office. Shayne closed the door behind them. They were alone, and the big redhead turned to the girl, who was slumped in a chair with Lucy hovering over her.

"All right, miss. Now what's the trouble?"

The girl's eyes were green and very wide and very scared as she looked up at Shayne. "I—I think I killed my fiance."

II

THE ONLY sound in the office came from Lucy Hamilton's small gasp. The brown-eyed, secretary glanced at Mike Shayne in consterna-

tion. Shayne was watching the green-eyed girl.

"All right," Shayne said calmly, as if girls said they killed their sweethearts every day, "let's start with your name, who you are."

The girl sat there for a long moment in silence, staring at nothing at all as if she didn't want to remember who she was. Then she took a shuddering breath.

"I'm Maureen Glass, Mr. Shayne. I'm no one in particular. Until a year ago I lived with my parents here in Miami. My father died, my mother went to live with my aunt. I graduated from college and got a job. Dad left me a little money. I'm a research assistant to a bacteriologist. That's all there is."

"Except you have a fiance," Shayne said.

Her eyes were drowning pools of green. "Yes, I have a fiance. Or I had. I—I—"

"Name and details," Shayne said briskly, forcing her back to what he saw was her normally rational nature.

"Yes," she said. "His name is John Carson. Older than I am. Quite a bit, over thirty. A strong man, Mr. Shayne. I never really knew a man before, not a man like John. Boys until now. A man—tall, fair, beautiful—"

"What does he do?"

"Real estate. He sells real estate in Miami Beach. He does very well. He knows a lot of people who run the hotels. He's very well liked."

"When did you meet him?"

"At a party, about two months ago."

"Two months? When did you get engaged?"

She bit her lip, a small flush spreading over her pretty but drawn face. "We—I—I suppose I'm not sure we actually did get engaged. I assumed we did. I love him, Mr. Shayne, and I thought we were engaged."

The word hung in the quiet office—*thought*. Lucy Hamilton looked at the floor, and Shayne rubbed at his gaunt jaw. Outside in the restaurant voices hummed low, and soft music filtered vaguely into the office.

"Is that what the trouble is about, Miss Glass?" Shayne said gently. "You thought you were engaged, and he didn't?"

She nodded miserably. "Yes, in a way. I don't know. We talked about it last night, and he didn't exactly say we wouldn't be married. He—he evaded me. He—Oh, I suppose he did say no. Like that! No!"

Her voice was cracking again, on the edge, and Shayne stepped in fast.

"Had he led you to believe you were engaged?"

It worked. She shuddered into control. "Well, I'm not sure. I better tell you all of it. That party I met him at, Mr. Shayne, it was on his father's estate. John's a rich man, very rich. He doesn't have to work, but he feels that a man should work. He says a man isn't a man who doesn't do something."

"A solid citizen," Shayne said drily.

"He is!" Maureen Glass cried. "He's a fine man. I don't care if he won't marry me!"

The words echoed in the hollow room, and suddenly the girl was crying. Lucy Hamilton glared at Shayne. The redhead ignored her. He was watching the sobbing girl, looking at the dried blood on her green suit.

"That's what you fought about last night, isn't it?" Shayne said bluntly.

Her voice was a whisper through the tears, "Yes. We fought. In my apartment. I—I accused him of playing with me. It was awful. He drank, we both did. He said he wasn't ready to marry. I was rushing him. He had too much to do before he got married. His father wouldn't let him marry me. I called him a liar—he wasn't under his father's orders. I called him awful things. He hit me and I cried. Then we went out. We came here. He calmed me down. He said we'd work it out, we'd talk."

"Okay," Shayne said, "you came here. Then what?"

She seemed to be trying to picture last night in her mind. "We ate something, I think. I couldn't eat. But we came here to eat. John said I should eat. We drank some more. I was drunk, I know that. In here, then—"

She stopped, slowly shook her head. Lucy patted her shoulder.

Shayne tugged on his earlobe and waited. Maureen just sat and shook her head.

"We were here," she said, whispered, "but that's all I remember. Just that we were here. I don't remember leaving. That's what I was trying to find out from Mario. When did we leave? What happened?"

"What do you remember after being in here?" Shayne asked.

"Nothing," she said. Her green eyes stared at Shayne with wide fear. "Nothing at all, Mr. Shayne, until I woke up this afternoon. In my apartment. Alone. There was blood on my hands, my clothes, and I was alone. I was so afraid. I waited for John to call, to come to me. But nothing happened. I—I decided to go and find him and then I found my car was gone. It wasn't anywhere."

She seemed to see the empty space where her car had been. "I became very afraid. Small things began to come back. I heard John scream. I saw a knife in my mind, hazy. I saw myself in a rage, the knife in my hand, and I couldn't go look for John until I knew more."

"You remember nothing of what happened, or what you did after you were here?"

"No," Maureen Glass whispered. "Nothing at all. I just woke up, and there was blood. . . blood."

III

MIKE SHAYNE said, "Okay, let's find out what happened."



The detective strode to the door and signaled to Mario, who sat at a corner of his long bar looking worried. The owner jumped up and came to the office. Shayne closed the door behind Mario.

"Tell me about Miss Glass and last night, Mario," Shayne said. "She was in here with a man?"

"Yeah, that's right," Mario said.

"Why didn't you want to talk to her now?"

Mario spread his hands in resignation. "Look, Mr. Shayne, I don't want trouble, you know? The lady came in raising hell. I don't have to talk to her when she makes a scene in my place."

"Okay, the lady apologizes. Now tell me about last night."

Mario squirmed. "I apologize, too. Okay. Look, I didn't do anything to the lady or her escort, see?

Maybe we forget the whole thing.”

“Is there something to forget, Mario?”

Mario looked miserable. “Yeah, there is, only what else could I do? They were drunk, making noise, disturbing the customers. The man especially—staggering, shouting. Once he even fell down.”

Maureen Glass cried, “Not John! Never.”

“Tall guy,” Shayne said. “Blond, good-looking?”

“That’s him. They was both smashed, staggering. Miss Glass here, and the guy. Sorry, Miss Glass. That’s the truth. We don’t get much of that, and we don’t like it.”

“You’re saying you had to throw them out, Mario? Manhandle the guy some—that’s why you don’t want to talk about it?”

“That’s it, Mr. Shayne. Gives the place a bad name. Who wants the story getting around?”

Maureen Glass blinked. “You threw us out? John, too?”

“Both of you.”

Shayne said, “What happened then, Mario?”

“Nothing. They just went off.”

“Both of them, and both okay?” Shayne asked.

“Okay, except so drunk they didn’t walk too good.”

Maureen Glass seemed to slump smaller. Mario was saying she and John Carson had left under their own power, and that he didn’t know anything else.

“There were just the two of

them?” Shayne asked. “No one else with them. No one talked to them, joined them? Nothing happened to Carson as far as you know?”

“That’s it. They were all alone, just the two of them. If anyone talked to them, I didn’t see it.”

Shayne looked at Maureen Glass. “Does it bring back anything?”

“No, nothing. I can’t remember at all.”

“Does John usually drink heavily? Do you?”

She shook her head. “Never. I never saw him drunk, and I never got drunk.”

Mario shrugged. “You sure did last night, believe me.”

Shayne considered. He could see no reason for Mario to lie. At least, he couldn’t see any reason yet. Still, the owner had been mighty anxious to get Maureen Glass out today, and just as anxious to not tell the story.

“So you had them tossed out. Did you see them after they left the place?”

“On the sidewalk. They were so drunk I wanted to keep an eye on them. I was maybe going to call the cops, but they drove off, and that’s the last I saw of them.”

“What kind of car did they drive off in?” Shayne said.

“No car. They took a taxi.”

“You’re sure?”

“Sure I’m sure. I saw them get into a cab. I was glad, you know? They weren’t going to come back.”

Maureen Glass suddenly sat bolt upright. “A taxi! Of course. Now I

remember—a little. We did take a cab. John almost fell getting in. We—we argued some more about us.”

“But you have a car,” Shayne said. “Why take a cab?”

She shook her head in despair. “I don’t remember. We—Wait! Of course! What a fool I am! My car’s in the garage. It’s being repaired! I had some steering trouble. So we came here in a taxi! Oh how stupid of me! That’s why my car wasn’t at home—it wasn’t supposed to be.”

Shayne nodded. “Probably the rest of your problem’s as simple as that. There’s probably a simple explanation for the blood.”

“Do you really think so, Mr. Shayne?” Maureen Glass said.

Shayne smiled. “Sure, I do. But we’ll check it out anyway. We’ve got two leads now—the taxi driver, maybe, and the garage. I think we’ll check the garage first. If we find it there, it’ll go a long way toward proving all you had was a nightmare.”

Maureen Glass nodded eagerly. Lucy Hamilton didn’t look so optimistic. Shayne’s face showed nothing one way or the other. Only Mario seemed completely happy. He was glad to get a problem out of his restaurant.

IV

THE OWNER of the garage was all smiles as he came to greet Mike Shayne and Maureen Glass, wiping

his oily hands on some waste as he came. Lucy had gone to see if she could locate the taxi driver who had picked Maureen and John Carson up last night outside Mario’s.

“Evenin’ Miss Glass,” the garageman said. “How you feelin’ tonight?”

“I feel fine, Mr. Forbes,” Maureen said.

Shayne said, “Wasn’t Miss Glass feeling good the last time you saw her? And when was that?”

The garageman, Forbes, laughed. “She don’t remember, huh? That figures. I seen people carrying a load of booze before, but Miss Glass had one of the biggest. Don’t know how she got here.”

“I was so drunk?” Maureen asked, red-faced.

“Polluted. You don’t remember takin’ a spill on the floor? Fightin’ with me?” Forbes grinned.

“A fall?” Shayne said. “Did she cut herself? A bloody nose, maybe?”

“Nah, when they’re that loaded they fall soft. No damage at all.”

“What did you fight about?”

“Her car. What else? She was yelling I was a crook to charge so much, and I was tellin’ her she wasn’t in no condition to drive. I thought I’d won that fight, only when I got another customer, she grabbed her heap and went out of here like on a police call. I’m damned glad to see she made it okay, wherever she was goin’.”

Maureen Glass only stared at Forbes. Shayne felt a sinking in his

stomach. Forbes watched them as if puzzled. Maureen sat down on a barrel. Shayne tugged at his ear.

"She took her car, Forbes?"

"Took is the word. I swear I'd never have let her drive out in the shape she was in. I been feelin' bad about it all day."

"Was she alone?"

"Alone? Yeah, sure. That's why I wondered how she got here."

"When was all this?"

Forbes scratched at his cheek. "Let's see, it must of been around midnight. Hold it. I'll get the check-out sheet and the bill."

While Forbes was gone, Maureen Glass sat with her face going grayer and grayer. In itself the car meant nothing, but it made the girl's black-out of last night a hell of a lot more ominous to Shayne. Mario, and now Forbes, described a very drunken girl. Maureen could remember nothing. She had been with John Carson at Mario's, alone here at the garage about three hours later. And after that?

Forbes came back. "Here it is. She drove the car out about twelve fifteen last night, signed the bill about midnight on the nose."

Shayne looked at the check-out sheet. The entry was clear, with a scrawled notation that she had not signed the car out, just taken it. The bill was receipted and signed in a shaky hand.

"Is this your signature, Maureen?" Shayne asked.

The girl looked at it, her hands

shaking. "I don't know. It looks like it, but it's so ragged."

"You were mighty plastered, Miss Glass." Forbes grinned again. The garageman seemed to think it was all very funny.

"You're sure she was alone?" Shayne said. "And you don't know how she got here?"

"I didn't see anyone with her, and how she got here I ain't got no idea. She just walked in like—if you can call it walking. I tell you, mister, I don't let her take the car if she don't run off with it."

"You didn't have any hint where she was going?"

Forbes shook his head. "She wasn't making much sense."

Maureen seemed to be shrinking every second, falling into a shaking silence. Shayne tugged slowly on his left earlobe as he watched her. He was sure the girl wasn't acting; she was scared and worried. But that didn't mean much.

She admitted she had no memory of last night, no story to tell of what had happened—if anything. All she knew was that she felt, deep inside, that something had happened, something terrible. That she had come to pick up her car didn't make anything better.

"Let's go Maureen," Mike Shayne said.

They left Forbes still grinning. The garageman had a macabre sense of humor—or did he? There was a rigidity to the smile that made Shayne think of a frozen death mask.

Forbes was maybe not as amused as he made out to be.

Outside in his car, Shayne turned to the girl. "You don't remember getting the car?"

"No," she whispered. "Not at all, not a glimmer. Could I forget something like that so completely?"

"It's possible," Shayne admitted. "The question now is where is the car? According to Forbes you were alone. That could be good."

"Or it could be bad, Mr. Shayne, couldn't it? He said I drove out in a hurry. Perhaps I'd already killed—"

"Forget that! No more of that until we have a reason. The way Forbes describes last night, you could have had another big fight with Carson and walked out on him. You came alone for your car because you'd had the fight."

"But where did I go then? Where is my car? I woke up at home. The car should be there."

"Maybe you met Carson again and he took the car. Does he have his own car?"

"No, and that was strange."

"Okay," Shayne said. "Let's call in and see what Lucy has."

V

LUCY HAMILTON was waiting outside the taxi company garage. Mike Shayne strode up. Maureen Glass hung back as if she did not want to find out what Lucy had discovered from the taxi driver.

"Pay dirt, Angel?" Shayne asked.

"Yes, Michael," the brown-eyed girl said, not looking at Maureen Glass. "I found the driver. I thought you'd want to talk to him yourself."

"Where is he?"

"Inside the office."

Lucy led the way through the garage into the cluttered office of the taxi company. The dispatcher and a small, wiry man in a leather jacket waited for them in the office. The dispatcher looked at Lucy, and then Mike Shayne.

"You wanted to talk to Joe here? What about?"

"A fare he picked up last night outside Mario's Restaurant," Shayne said.

The driver, Joe Marr, was looking nervously at Maureen Glass.

"You got nerve. Joe's losin' time, and so am I," the dispatcher said.

"You I don't give a damn about, friend," Shayne said, "and if Joe'd rather talk to the police that's okay with me."

The driver jumped as if bitten. "It's okay, Fred. I don't want no money. Just ask me what you want to know, mister. You on some kind of case?"

"That's right," Shayne said. "Did you pick this woman up at Mario's last night?"

Shayne nodded to Maureen Glass. The girl was staring at the wiry little driver, trying to remember him.

"Yeah," Marr said, "her and a guy. Blond guy, good-looking. They was staggering out. I don't like taking drunks, but the guy just about put

the arm on me. He was sure in a hurry."

"But they were drunk?"

"The dame—excuse me, Miss," the driver said, and almost blushed. "The lady was pretty bad, falling down almost. The guy wasn't so bad. I mean, well—"

Shayne snapped, "Well what, Joe?"

The driver scratched at his head. "Well, I seen guys like he was before. I mean, it was like he was pretty far gone on the sauce, but he'd maybe had to sober up fast, or try to, you know? He was drunk, yeah, only it was like his eyes wasn't so drunk no more when he got to my cab. And he moved pretty fast to get in."

"What time was this?"

"Around nine."

"Where did you take them?"

It was the big question. Shayne watched the driver as he asked it. Lucy Hamilton blinked nervously, and Maureen Glass seemed to sway where she stood trying to look calm. Joe Marr glanced at the dispatcher.

"Some apartment house," Marr said. "You want me to take you? If it's okay with Fred."

"Long as they pay the meter," Fred said. "It's better than talkin' for free."

"Take us," Shayne said.

Maureen and Lucy sat in the back, while Shayne sat beside the driver as the taxi drove through the Miami night. They passed out of the dim taxi-garage area, through the downtown, and out into a slick, new

section of middle-class apartment houses.

The driver stopped on the edge of this section, in front of a discreet new supper-club type bar.

"This is it," Marr said.

"The bar?" Shayne said.

"Nope, that door next to it. It's for the apartments up above."

Shayne leaned out of the cab and looked up. Six stories of apartments were above the supper club. He got out and told the driver to wait. Maureen Glass got out with Lucy and stood on the quiet sidewalk, staring around.

"Remember anything?" Shayne asked.

She shook her head. "Nothing, Mr. Shayne. I've never been here before."

"This is where the driver brought you and Carson."

"I just don't remember. He must be wrong!"

The driver had been listening. "This is the place, Miss. The guy paid me off. I remember, he gave me a five and dragged you off without any change. I went after, but you two went into the building and when I got inside you was gone."

Shayne said, "Think, Maureen."

"I can't. I just don't remember. Oh God, was I that drunk? And what were we doing here? I don't know this place."

"Let's find out," Shayne said grimly.

He took the trembling girl's arm and walked into the lobby of the

building. It was a small lobby, brightly lighted and expensive. A bank of two self-service elevators shined in stainless steel at the rear.

Maureen stopped dead just inside the front door. The girl stared at a massive steel-and-bronze modern sculpture on the left wall. It was made of thousands of small, shining plates, and a hidden spotlight moved over its surface making all the plates appear to move.

"I—I think," the girl stammered, staring at the sculpture, "I remember something. Shapes, Mr. Shayne, just shining shapes. I thought it was all a nightmare, but they were a lot like that!"

"You think you saw that last night?"

"I don't know. I've got a vague impression—yes, that's it, an impression. I feel I've seen shapes like that. Maybe last night."

"You're sure you've never been here?"

"Never that I remember. Why would I? I don't know anyone here."

"Maybe Carson did," Shayne said.

He strode to the rows of mailboxes. He read across the rows, up and down, and suddenly his eyes stopped and became hard points as he looked at one box.

"Come here, Maureen."

The girl joined him, looked. Her eyes widened, and she turned to Shayne with her face a mask of confusion.

"But he lives with his father. On the estate!"



The name on the mailbox was:
John Carson.

"He had a job he didn't have to have," Shayne said. "It looks like he had an apartment he didn't need, too."

"He never told me! We always had to go to my place," Maureen said. "He didn't like to bring me home too much, he said, because he refused to let his parents interfere no matter how much money they had."

"Maybe that was true, and maybe not," Shayne said. "But he brought you here last night. You've got an impression of that sculpture. What else?"

She shook her head miserably. "Nothing, Mr. Shayne. Nothing at all."

"All right. This is only a lobby. Your brain has seen a hundred of them. Let's go up."

John Carson's apartment was listed as 4-B. They went up in one of the silent elevators, no one saying anything. Lucy Hamilton faced rigidly front in the car. Maureen Glass continued to stare around as if searching for one familiar object, one flash of recollection.

It came as they stepped from the elevator.

"That—that chair!"

A small armchair stood in the corridor of the fourth floor directly facing the elevator. Maureen Glass stared hard at it, her eyes going blank and glazed as if staring into some dark and narrow opening no one else could see.

"I—," she began, blinked, shook her head furiously like a dog shaking a rag doll. She closed her eyes, pressed her small hands hard against her temples. "I was here, yes. I don't know when. I remember—that chair. I . . . John had my arm; he held me. He was dragging me out of the elevator and I fell against that chair! Yes. I knocked it over."

She opened her eyes, walked to the chair. Shayne leaned down over her and saw the dent mark in the chair leg.

Maureen said, "It hit against the corner of the wall there. I—I fell against it, knocked it over." Her eyes

were closed again, her hands squeezing at her head as if to press out the memories, the mist floating in her mind.

"He pulled me up—no, helped me up and hurried me along the corridor that way to—to a door. A gray door, with something on it, shiny. I . . ."

She opened her eyes. "That's all I can see, Mr. Shayne. It's so hazy, so vague. I can't be sure I'm remembering it, or imagining it. There was a door, and the shiny thing seemed to float away, and that's all."

Shayne said, "Okay, which was the gray door?"

"That way."

She pointed to the right of the elevators. Shayne walked ahead. All the doors were gray. So were a million others in Miami apartments. He turned left at the end of the corridor, went past two more doors, and stopped in front of 4-B.

A shiny brass knocker hung on the door.

"It's the only door with a knocker," Shayne said.

"The shiny thing that floated away," Lucy said.

"When Carson opened the door it floated away," Shayne said.

Shayne tried the door. It was locked. He looked up and down the silent corridor. Then he took out his special ring of keys, and went to work. The fifth key he tried turned the lock with a sharp click. The door swung open and they stepped inside.

Maureen Glass gasped in horror.

The room was a wreck, a shambles from some struggle—and blood was everywhere.

VI

MIKE SHAYNE closed the door fast behind him. The three of them stood there in the room in silence. Shayne was grim, Maureen Glass horrified, and Lucy Hamilton uneasy as she glanced at Maureen.

The battle that had occurred in the room was obvious. Chairs were turned over, tables knocked aside, a rug crumpled up. And yet it had not been a long or wide struggle. All the damage was in a small area. And most of the blood was in the same area.

Shayne kneeled down near the largest pool of blood. It was dry, browned. He stood up.

"It looks like someone was injured here, Maureen, and quite a while ago. Last night, I'd say. There was a fight of some kind. You have a hazy memory of a rage, John screaming, a knife in your hand. It fits."

She slumped into a chair. "Then it's all true. I was here and I killed him!"

"It looks like you were here," Shayne said, "but that doesn't prove you killed him. It's not certain the blood is his, or if it is that he's dead. Maybe he was stabbed, or shot someone else. Maybe he was only wounded and you ran without knowing."

Maureen made a sound. "With my memory? My dreams? What I think I

dreamed? No, I killed him. Look at Lucy."

Lucy Hamilton had been standing in a kind of rigid trance, her brown eyes fixed toward Maureen with a dark expression in them that accused the girl. Her whole face was covered with naked suspicion. Now, as Maureen pointed to her, she flushed.

"I'm sorry," Lucy said. "It was a reaction, a reflex. I don't believe you killed anyone, Maureen."

Maureen shook her head. "No, you don't really want to believe I killed John, but you do. You can't help it. All the evidence points to it. Everyone will think the same."

"Then," Shayne snapped, "let's see what evidence we can find to make them change their minds."

The redhead began a careful search of the room. Lucy helped. Maureen sat and watched them, but never left the chair where she slumped, her eyes dull now, sure that she had killed her fiancé, sure that her dream had been, after all, real.

Shayne searched in silence. He was trying not to show it on his face, but the girl's dream was becoming very real to him, too. If it had ever been a dream in Maureen's mind. Was she conning him? He didn't see any advantage to her in that, and yet it was all becoming too much coincidence.

Step by step her supposed dream was becoming real. The dream story was looking worse and worse. Yet she had come to Mario's with her story, and if she had really killed

John Carson, and knew that, she should have sat tight, waited, and told her story only if the police found their way to her door.

Or did she hope to confuse the issue, make herself look as innocent as possible, by coming forward before any crime had been discovered? Was she smart enough, devious enough, to do that? Shayne didn't know. He could only go on looking.

The first thing he found was a pair of pistols in the bottom drawer. They were small, efficient, snub-nosed .38 caliber guns, and they were not new. They were well-cared for pistols, and their holsters—one shoulder and one small side holster—showed use.

He found the money hidden inside a suitcase in the closet. A lot of money, wrapped in neat packages.

"Rich men's sons don't usually have suitcases full of packs of money," Shayne said.

"I don't know anything about any money," Maureen said.

There were suits, shirts, jackets and pants, a closed full of them, and they all had New York labels. There was a second closet with clothes that bore Miami labels. The clothes with the New York labels were all neat and looked like they had not been worn in some time.

In a small attache case Shayne found business cards for a man named Jack Cansoni. The cards were for a salesman in the building construction industry at an address in New York. There was nothing else in

the attache case that related to the construction business, but there were three small, leather-bound books filled with names, addresses, and numbers.

The entries in the books were followed by paragraphs that had to be in some kind of code.

Maureen Glass looked at it all—the guns, the New York clothes, the New York business cards, the leather books, the money. Her face was a picture of dull confusion. As she looked at each item she shook her head in a kind of hopeless despair.

"What does it mean, Mr. Shayne? None of these things makes any sense. This isn't my John."

"You never saw these clothes?"

"Never. The other closet, those are his clothes. Only what they're doing here I don't know. I never knew he had this place."

"He never spoke of money, or New York?"

"No. He'd lived here all his life. At his father's house."

"And the guns?"

"Why would John have guns?" she said.

"I don't know. The business cards are for a man named Cansoni. Did John ever mention Cansoni?"

"No."

Shayne looked around. "It could be he had a roommate. Two men lived here. The separate closets could show that. If he did live with another guy, they're both missing. Maybe that's our answer."

"But wouldn't I know if there'd

been another man here last night?"

"You were pretty drunk."

"How could anyone be that drunk?"

"I don't know," Shayne said bluntly. "You ever remember being that drunk before? Do you black out much?"

"No, never, I don't usually drink that much, and I'm told I can hold my drink."

Shayne scratched at his gaunt jaw. Either she was very honest, very clever, or very naive. Every time he gave her an opening to make her story stronger, like having a history of blackouts, she gave answers that made it all worse.

It took a lot of drink, over a long period, to produce a walking blackout such as she seemed to have had, unless a person was prone to such blackouts. But if she really had had one, then fifty men could have been here and she might not remember.

"Let's say there were two men living here, and Carson had some reason to keep the apartment hidden from you. Something he didn't want you to know."

Maureen whispered, "Do you think so? Perhaps that was why he didn't want to get married?"

"Maybe," Shayne said. "What I don't get is if he was hiding something, or someone like Cansoni, why bring you here last night?"

"I don't know," she said. Then she gave a small gasp as she understood what Shayne meant. "You mean perhaps I wasn't here last

night? It was some other night? But how—"

"I don't know yet," Shayne said. "Let's say you were here. Maybe he was so drunk himself he forgot. Maybe when he got here Cansoni started the fight because you were here."

"Then how did I get home?"

"That's the question I want to know about," Shayne said. He knelt down in front of her, looked hard into her face. "You dragged up impressions of coming here. Now you're here. Something happened. There was a knife; that's the part in your dream, and you're not going to remember that too much."

"I—I'll try. But all I can see is my dream. I—"

"That's all you will see for now. The idea of the dream blocks out the reality. Skip it. Go past it. Think about the door, the corridor again, the trip away. Think of going away!"

She nodded, her face set with effort. "All right. I'm in here. I'm going away. I fell against that chair coming in. I—I must have passed the chair going away—to the elevator. I—No! Not the elevator! I—"

She blinked at Shayne. "The stairs," she said in a low whisper. "The stairs. I went down the stairs."

VII

MIKE SHAYNE watched Maureen Glass. "Why the stairs?" he asked the girl.

"I don't know!" she cried. "I'm not even sure about it. It's an impression of stairs, that's all. I'm not even sure I was alone. I—someone could have been with me. I stumbled. Someone held me up, or something. The stair rail—I don't know."

"Okay," Shayne said. "You went down the stairs. Then what?"

"A car," she said. "I was in a car. We were driving. I was, I'm not sure. I can see traffic lights, street lights. It's all a haze, Mr. Shayne. I can't even be sure I'm not making it up, imagining it all."

"Whose car?"

"I don't know. I think I was driving. It must have been my own car. I got it, didn't I?"

"How did you get from here to the garage?"

She shook her head wearily. "I have no idea. All I seem to remember was being in a car, driving a car. We—" She stopped and her whole face twisted in a frown. "There's something else, earlier. I think I saw that statue again, the one down in the lobby. All glimmering and moving. And there was a man. An odd man, small and thick. I—I know him, that man. From somewhere."

"Where?"

"It won't come. But I remember the shining shapes, that statue downstairs in the lobby, and the thick man seems to be part of the shapes. His face all shimmering, too. Just his face, his shape. Watching me."

"What was he doing?"

"Nothing. Just watching."

Shayne swore. "Damn! It could have been anyone just in the lobby, or a memory of someone from a year ago. It doesn't mean a thing."

Maureen Glass bit her lip and big tears began to roll down her face. She covered her face with her hands as she broke down and sobbed without control. Shayne watched her gloomily. Lucy Hamilton darted him a nasty look and hurried to comfort the girl.

Maureen sobbed, "I'm trying, Mr. Shayne, really I am. I just can't remember much. It's all so mixed up, like a lot of different dreams all running together in my head. When I try to think I feel all fuzzy, confused."

"Okay," Shayne said, "we'll forget that thick man. You were in your car, driving. It must have been after midnight. You'd been here sometime after nine and you picked up your car around midnight. You drove. Where did you drive?"

Maureen sobbed on, her shoulders trembling, her whole body shaking. Lucy spoke low and soothing to her. Shayne took out a cigarette, lit it, and studied the floor as if Maureen's hazy memory might come clear down there.

After a time, Maureen calmed, the tears stopped, and her wet face looked up at Shayne. She tried to smile. Lucy patted her.

"I'm sorry," the girl said, "I needed to do that, I guess."

"Feel better?" Shayne said.

"Yes. I'll be all right now."

"Okay, then where did you drive to?"

"How do I know, Mr. Shayne? All I can recall is driving. I don't remember how I got home, but I must have—yet my car isn't at home."

"So your car is somewhere else, and you got home one of two ways: either you took some other car or taxi; or someone drove you home and put you to bed. Anyone have a key?"

"John did," she said low.

"You couldn't have both killed him and been brought home by him," Shayne said bluntly. "Let's hope he did bring you home. What I want to know is where he brought you from. Did you ever think that maybe John Carson murdered someone else and that's how you got the blood on you?"

Her naive eyes widened. "You think John killed someone? He—he was the only one who could have brought me home."

"Try to think of where you went!"

"I can't! I'm trying. I just drove. There were lights, and—and then somewhere dark. Yes, dark. I think I remember water now, dark water. A lonely place. I feel very lonely when I think—cold, afraid. It makes me afraid to think about it."

"Water," Shayne said. "Was there a boat?"

"I don't remember."

"Other people? Maybe John?"

"I can't think."

"Was your car there? Did you



park? Try to think of the steering wheel in your hand. Those motions are automatic. Try to think of parking."

Maureen closed her eyes. Her wet, stained face strained with effort. Her eyes remained closed as she shook her head. "I don't feel anything about parking. I feel a dark place, lonely, water..."

Her voice trailed off. She still sat with her eyes closed as if she felt safe in a world of darkness. Lucy and Shayne looked at each other.

"All right," Shayne said, "maybe you didn't park, Maureen. Maybe you weren't driving after all."

Maureen did not react at once. She sat there with her eyes closed, and Shayne and Lucy waited. The bloody room was very quiet. Traffic passed out in the night, but in the room there was no sound.

Then the noise seemed to grow in the distance.

A rumbling like a far-off surf coming nearer.

Voices—and many feet hurrying along the corridor from the elevators and the stairs. Heavy feet and low, grim voices with hard accents like metal.

The sound grew until Shayne realized that it was five or six men coming closer to the door of John Carson's hidden apartment. Voices that stopped outside the door. A key scraped in the lock. The door opened.

A man who had to be the manager of the apartment stepped in with a key in his hand. He stopped dead in his tracks and just stared in complete confusion at Shayne, Lucy and the seated Maureen Glass.

"Who—" he began.

The five men behind him moved with precision to take up positions. Two stood in the open doorway, guarding it. Two came into the room and fanned out one to each side. The fifth man stepped past the manager and walked to Shayne.

"Hello, Mike. What's going on?" he asked.

Shayne smiled at Lieutenant George Bellows of Miami Homicide.

"I guess you know more than I do, George, or you wouldn't be here," Shayne said quietly. "Who's dead?"

Bellows didn't answer. The lieutenant was looking at Maureen Glass who still sat with her eyes

closed as if she would never open them again.

"Who's that?"

"Miss Maureen Glass," Shayne said.

"So?" Bellows said, his face going hard. "Then I guess you know who's dead as well as I do, Mike."

With a low moan, Maureen Glass opened her eyes, stared at them all, and slipped to the floor in a dead faint.

VIII

THEY HAD CARRIED Maureen Glass into the bedroom. Lucy Hamilton was with her, and they had sent for a policewoman. Now Mike Shayne sat in the bloody living room of the apartment, and Lieutenant Bellows listened to the redhead's story.

"So that's it, George," Shayne concluded. "She doesn't remember much of anything. It's all a haze. She fought with Carson, she took a cab to here, later she got her car, and this morning she woke up in her apartment with blood on her and no memory of last night."

"It's a nice story, if you want to believe it."

"I believe it."

"Maybe I do, too," Bellows said, "but what difference does it make? John Carson is dead. Your client was afraid she'd killed him, and she was right. She did kill him. Second degree, maybe, but homicide all the same."

"You want to tell me your details, George?"

Bellows considered. "Okay, Mike, I don't see why not. A couple of hobos found the body about ten o'clock this morning. Male, blond, good-looking; identification on him said he was John Carson, but there was no address on him."

"Where'd they find him?"

"About two miles from here. A deserted warehouse vacant lot near the bay."

Shayne thought: *lonely, silent, near water*. It fitted Maureen's vague memory exactly.

"How was he killed?"

"Stabbed twice. Not much blood at the scene. I guess he got it here and was taken out there."

"How did you locate this place and put Maureen in the picture?" Shayne asked slowly. "You knew who she was as soon as I said her name."

"It took us most of the day, Mike. First, there were car tracks in the lot. We dug up a hobo who remembered seeing a car there about one A.M. He was a pretty alert bum and he gave us a description. We sent out a city-wide alert on the car. Then we traced Carson. He isn't listed in the telephone book but he had some real estate literature on him. We finally tracked him to Hammill Realty Company, and got this address.

"About the same time a cruise car spotted Miss Glass's car parked in an alley not five blocks from where she

lives. It fitted the description of the car the tramp had seen, and it was full of blood stains. We traced it to her. We've been looking for her. When we got Carson's address we came here, and that's it. People at Hammill Realty had tied her and Carson together."

"And my story, or her own story, finishes it off," Shayne said grimly. "He didn't want to marry her; they battled. They came here. They got smashed. She killed him here, and then went and got her car. She got him into her car, drove him out to that warehouse lot, and dumped him. She drove back, abandoned her car where you found it, and went to bed and forgot it all."

"That's how it has to be, Mike."

"Pretty dumb to just abandon her car. It had to be found and traced."

"She was dead drunk."

"Pretty dumb to start having all the memories that turn out exactly right and close the case on her."

"I think she really forgot, as she said," Bellows said. "She blacked out. She really didn't know what she'd done. But she did it, Mike."

Shayne rubbed his chin. "Yeah, I guess she did. It all works out clean. Except for one small point, George."

"What's that?"

"How big was Carson?"

"About six-feet-two, a hundred and ninety pounds."

"She's a smallish girl. How the hell did she get him down from here to the car?"

"Dragged him. There's blood on

the stairs," Bellows said, and he looked at Shayne. "That's why she took the stairs, Mike. That's why she remembered the stairs."

"The knife?"

Bellows stood up. The lieutenant didn't look happy. He chewed on his lip and looked toward the door of the bedroom where Lucy was still with Maureen Glass.

"It was in her car, Mike," Bellows said. "It's a carving knife, part of a set Carson has here in the kitchen."

Shayne had no more to say. What was there to say? Maureen had awakened afraid she had killed Carson—and everything said that she had. But one small point kept gnawing at the redhead's mind far down—Maureen Glass was not a girl who drank and had blackouts.

All right, she had been under heavy stress. Carson was jilting her, no doubt of it, and that can do a lot to a nice young girl one year away from home. Still there was something excessive about the drunkenness, the blackout. Murder has a way of shocking a person out of a drunk and a blackout.

Maureen was not a killer. He would have expected her to be shocked by what she had done, to try to help Carson, call a doctor, turn herself in—not dump his body, run, go home and sleep it all off to the point of amnesia about it.

Unless she wanted to forget. Her mind refusing to accept what she had done—refusing to accept that Carson, her lover, was dead at all.

Bellows turned to the door as the policewoman arrived.

"She's inside, Sergeant. She's under arrest. Get her in shape to go downtown."

IX

THE VISION OF Maureen Glass being led out kept Mike Shayne awake half the night afterwards. The girl had shuffled, her head down, not even the same bright girl any more. The one look she had given Shayne had been the hopeless glance of a lost animal.

"You've got to help her, Michael," Lucy Hamilton had said when they parted.

"How, Angel? It's as cold as a side of beef in a freezer. She said all along she thought she'd killed him."

"What do you say, Michael?"

"I say I need sleep."

But he hadn't slept. He tossed all night seeing the girl going to the cell from which she would never return. And all night his mind whispered: it was all too much, she had been too drunk, and how had she dragged Carson down all those stairs to her car.

He finally dozed at dawn and when he woke up the sun was high. A new day but the same questions. Not questions that were going to bother the police, but they bothered Shayne. He had a cigarette and thought about it.

She was guilty—she said so herself. He was a damned fool to mix in

it beyond trying to get her as light a sentence as possible, and that wasn't his job, but a lawyer's. He could get her a lawyer, and what else could he do?

By the time he had dressed, finished his coffee, and put on his panama to leave for the office, he knew that there was a lot he could do. The picture of John Carson's apartment, with the money and the guns and the evidence of a second man, came up into his mind.

He called Lucy Hamilton.

"I won't be in, Angel."

"Where will you be?" the brown-eyed girl said.

"Making a damn fool of myself." Shayne snapped.

"Working for Maureen?"

"Can you figure anything more stupid?"

"It's not stupid, Michael. I thought about it all night. I know she didn't kill him."

"You know more than I do then, Angel," Shayne said drily. "But hold the fort. I'll call in when I can."

He hung up and sat thinking for a time. The path was pretty clear. Someone had killed John Carson, and that someone would be found in his life. He didn't know if someone had deliberately framed Maureen Glass, or if it had all been chance. But, if Maureen hadn't killed Carson, then someone else in his life had.

He strode out and down to his car. In the bright morning sun he drove across the causeway into Miami Beach and the offices of

Hammill Realty. A curvaceous blond receptionist greeted him with an effusive smile.

"Yes, sir! Can we help you?"

"I want to see the head man," Shayne said. "About John Carson."

Her effusion vanished. "What about Mr. Carson? May I have your name?"

"Mike Shayne. I'm a private detective. The police know I'm working on the case."

The blond paled where she sat, and Shayne realized in a flash that the woman had more than a passing interest in the late John Carson. Something clicked in his mind—the hidden apartment, hidden from Maureen Glass at least, and John Carson had been a chaser! Suddenly he felt dimensions opening. Carson played women.

"You—you're working on John's murder?" the blond said.

"Yes," Shayne said. "Did you know him well, Miss—"

"Brant," she said, very low. "Joan Brant. I knew Johnny, yes. We—we were going to be married someday."

"Do you know Maureen Glass?"

Miss Brant's face froze. She looked at Shayne; then she reached into her purse, came out with a cigarette, lit it, blew smoke.

"No, I didn't know about her. Mr. Hammill, and the police, told me. John never mentioned her. Oh, I knew he had other women. He was a strong, handsome man. I didn't mind. It was me he loved, really. Some men just have to play with

more than one woman—they're strong and virile. But he loved me, I know that. If she says he was going to marry her she's lying!"

"Or he was," Shayne said bluntly.

"Why not? Some women will believe anything. I didn't make him ask me to marry him. He didn't have to. I know her type, that Glass woman. Too frozen to make love to a man unless she can tell herself he'll marry her. When she found he wasn't about to, that he was marrying me, she killed him!"

Her voice had risen slowly until she was almost shouting. In the real estate office everyone turned to stare at her. A big, red-faced man burst out of an inner office. His face had the lines and creases of joviality—a perpetual joviality that was part of his salesman's trade.

But there was no humor in his eyes, no friendliness in the curl of his thick lips, no pleasantness in his harsh voice.

"What the hell's going on here, Brant?"

The blond shrank in fear. "Nothing. I'm sorry, Mr. Hammill."

Shayne said, "Miss Brant is upset by John Carson's murder, Mr. Hammill. My fault. I brought it up."

"Who the hell are you then?" Hammill snapped.

"Mike Shayne. I'm a private detective on the case."

"Case?" Hammill said, blinked. "What case? Don't they have the damned woman who killed him?"

"Maybe they do and maybe they

don't," Shayne said coldly. He didn't like Hammill. "You want to talk about it?"

"No, I don't! You can get out of here now. I've got an office to run, Mr. Peeper, and no time to waste on you."

"That so?" Shayne said, his voice like steel. "Okay, only I'm not going away just to please you, and I've got a hunch you won't get a lot done around here until the whole thing's over."

"Is that a threat?"

"No, just a fact. The sooner we settle this, the faster you get back to normal."

Hammill glared at the redhead. Shayne grinned his best wolf-grin. Their eyes locked. Hammill backed down first. The red-faced man turned on his heel.

"Okay. Come in and we'll get it over with."

In Hammill's office, Shayne sat and faced the big man across his desk. Hammill toyed with a letter-opener. It was a long, dagger-type opener, and after a moment Hammill seemed to see it in his hand and dropped it as if it burned.

Hammill shivered. "I can't really believe John was stabbed even now. What do you want from me, Shayne?"

"Anything you can tell me about Carson."

"There isn't much to tell. He'd been with us only a year, but he'd done well. He was a born salesman and he knew houses and building."

"Where did he work before he came here?"

"I don't know. His father's a rich man; I suppose you know that. He said he hadn't actually worked for a long time. He got his knowledge, he said, from studying architecture."

"But he didn't live at home?"

"You mean with his father? No, he had his own place. I told the police that."

"How was he doing—money-wise, I mean?"

"Fair, but, of course, he didn't really need money. He said a man should work."

"Anything odd about him? Anything strange you noticed?"

"No, not really. He didn't socialize with us much—except for the women, of course. John liked women." Hammill stopped, and stared at the dagger paper-opener. "I guess that killed him in the end, didn't it?"

"Maybe. What other women here did he chase besides Miss Brant?"

"He played them all. I didn't exactly like it, but he was a good salesman. I don't think he got very serious with any except Brant. I guess he got pretty far with her. She's been on the edge of hysteria all morning, tense as hell since the cops came yesterday."

"They talked to her, the cops?"

"For hours. I don't think she had an alibi for when Carson was killed. Of course, that was before they found the woman who killed him."

"Lucky for Miss Brant," Shayne



said. "Do you have the address of Carson's father?"

"I think so," Hammill said, and buzzed his secretary.

The secretary gave him the address for Mr. James P. Carson. Shayne left. He felt the hot eyes of Miss Joan Brant on his back all the way out. He thought about her in his car all the way back across the causeway.

Joan Brant had been one of Carson's women. Maybe the dead playboy had refused to marry her, too. Shayne thought she looked much more capable of killing a faithless lover than Maureen Glass.

X

THE HOME OF James P. Carson turned out to be an enormous estate in one of the oldest and best sections of Miami. An iron fence, twelve feet high, surrounded what had to be

twenty acres of lush grounds. The gate had a gatehouse as large as most tract-homes. The garage was big enough to hold six cars and had a full house above it. There were two other cottages on the grounds.

The main house itself was a turn-of-the-century mansion. It stood three stories high, white-frame, and was topped by towers and cupolas and grinning gargoyles of a past age. Mike Shayne gave his name and business at the gatehouse and was permitted to drive up the long driveway. A man in striped trousers and silver-gray hair met him on the front steps.

"Mr. Shayne?"

"That's right."

"Mr. Carson will see you in the front study."

The butler led Shayne into the house and along a wide corridor to a small, elegant room with walls of books. The books had all been read, dog-eared, with paper markers sticking out. It was a good room, a comfortable room. Somehow, Shayne did not see John Carson in these rooms.

"Mr. Shayne?"

Shayne turned and saw a small, slender, dapper man in his sixties. The man's hair was iron-gray and tended like a prize garden. An expensive lounge suit of the softest gray flannel hung on his frame as if it had been sewn on him, and probably had been. Money was no object to a man who could pay a tailor of the skill of the one who had made that suit.

"That's right," Shayne said. "Mr. James Carson?"

Carson nodded briefly. "I'm rather confused, Mr. Shayne. You say you want to talk to me about my son. The police came to say the same thing. But, you see, I have no son. I never did have a son."

"No son?" Shayne said, gaped. "A nephew maybe?"

"No. I have no young male relation at all. My first wife and I had no children. My second wife and I have been married only six years. We have no children, and if we had they would hardly be very old."

"Did you know that someone was posing as your son?"

"I did not," Carson said sharply. "If I had, I assure you I would have taken steps."

"Did the police describe John Carson to you?"

"They did. The description was entirely unfamiliar to me. So, you see, I can't possibly help you in the matter. I told the police the same."

"Carson brought people here, girls. He entertained them here, and he gave your address as one of his home addresses. How could he have done that? How could he have gotten past the gate? And if he did get past the gate, why didn't you know he was using your place?"

The dapper man considered that, and sat down. He did not ask Shayne to sit down. He tented his hands, spoke crisply.

"My wife and I are often away. We have a house in the Bahamas, too.

As a matter of fact, I've been away much of this year, often for a month at a time. It is possible he could come here unobserved, once he got past the gate."

"Servants?"

"I have a small staff these days; we take most of them with us. However, we do not take our gate-keeper. No one could get past him. Still, I imagine your John Carson could have come over the fence."

"No, he brought people here. He drove in. And I'd be pretty surprised if people hadn't at least called him here."

"Then I'm at a loss to explain it. All I can say is that I have no son, I have no idea who this person calling himself John Carson was, and I have no idea how he got into my house."

Shayne watched the small man. Under the iron-gray hair the elegant face was completely composed, and the blue eyes were like opaque marbles. They were the eyes of a man who had power and who knew how to use that power. They were also eyes that could hide almost anything.

"Don't you want to find out how he got into your house and why? Who he was?"

"No, I don't. If he were alive, yes. But since it seems he's dead, the matter holds no more interest for me."

"Why?"

"Why what, Mr. Shayne? Does that word mean something?"

"Why do you want to bury it, forget it? He got in here. You must

have some ideas. Someone here had to have been aware of him and what he was doing."

Carson stood up. "That will be all, Mr. Shayne. I have no desire to pursue the matter further and my reasons are no concern of yours. Am I clear?"

"Yeah," Shayne said drily, "you're real clear."

The redhead thanked Carson for his time, and strode out of the small study. James Carson had some reason for burying the whole affair. What? Carson knew more than he would say—or, at least, he suspected more, had some ideas, and he didn't want to think about those ideas.

Shayne was still thinking about it as he reached the massive front door of the old mansion. The butler did not appear to let him out. His hand was on the door in the deserted hall when he heard a soft muffled voice call out.

"Mr. Shayne?"

He glanced around and saw no one. The hall was empty. All the doors he could see were closed.

"Here, Mr. Shayne. I'm behind the drapery."

A large tapestry hung along the wall some ten feet from Shayne. The corner fluttered, and he saw a pale face behind it in a small, hidden doorway.

"Come in. Quickly!"

Shayne glanced around. The hall was still empty. He stepped to the tapestry and behind it through the small, narrow doorway.

XI

SHE WAS A SHORT, slender woman of about thirty-five. Her pale face revealed what had once been a great beauty—a classic beauty, all blue blood and finishing school and ancestors back into the dim past. Her body was still full enough, ripe in that same finishing, reserved way. The kind of body that doesn't look like too much in severe clothes such as she wore, but when you looked more closely it was a full female body after all.

"Close that door, please," she said. Her voice was light but firm as if she too was used to some power.

Mike Shayne closed the door. He guessed. "Mrs. Carson?"

She nodded. "Yes. I'm Mrs. James Carson. Adelle Carson. I prefer to be called Adelle. You—Sit down, please."

Shayne sat down. Adelle Carson sat. For a long moment the elegant woman stared at Shayne.

"You want to know about John. Is that right, Mr. Shayne?"

"You knew him?" Shayne said.

"Yes, I knew him. His real name was Jack Cansoni. He came from out of town somewhere, I believe. He took my husband's name, and gave us as a reference to get his job with Hammill. He knew that with Mr. Carson's name behind him, Hammill would fall all over him."

"What kind of man was Jack Cansoni, Mrs. Carson?" Shayne said. He was thinking of the two pistols,

the New York business cards. There hadn't been two men at Carson's apartment, just one man with two names.

"I don't know, Mr. Shayne. Just a pleasant young man in need of a helping hand," Adelle Carson said.

"And you gave him that hand?"

"Yes, in a way. I saw to it that if he had mail here, he got it. If calls came, he got those, too."

"Did you know he was using your house as his own while you were gone?"

"No. I didn't know that."

"That he brought girls here? Or at least one girl? Passed himself off as your son, passed the house off as his own?"

"No, I didn't. Mr. Carson would have been very angry about that kind of thing."

Shayne considered her. She spoke calmly enough, but there was tension under her smooth surface. She was on the edge, ready to jump at shadows, and she had called him to talk to her out of sight of her husband.

"How could Cansoni get away with it all, Mrs. Carson? How did you meet him in the first place?"

"It's really quite simple. Mr. Shayne. You see, his real father is our gatekeeper, Aldo Cansoni. Jack came down here, visited his father, and that was how I met him. Aldo approached me to help the young man."

Shayne listened to her speaking, and something struck him: she talked

as if Jack Cansoni, alias John Carson, had been a boy, and she a grown woman. Yet Cansoni, from all he knew, had been about thirty, and Mrs. Adelle Carson wasn't a lot older than that. It could be something, or nothing. Women married to older men sometimes acted as if they were a lot older themselves.

"What did your gatekeeper tell you about Cansoni?"

"Only that the young man was new in town and needed some help to get started. He assured me that Jack knew the real estate business well."

It sounded true enough, and Hammill had said that Carson, alias Cansoni, had known real estate and construction. Yet there were the guns, the false name and the hidden past—and now there was murder. It looked a little like Jack Cansoni maybe had had something to hide.

"So you think it was his father, Aldo, who let him use the place when you and your husband were away?"

"I suppose so, Mr. Shayne. There would have been no problem if Aldo let him past the gate. As I heard James tell you, we take the servants with us to the Bahamas."

"Yeah, there would have been no trouble."

Adelle Carson looked at the floor. "Mr. Shayne, I told you all this because I want a favor from you."

"That figures. What favor?"

"Aldo came to me. He's not a young man, and he likes his job with

us. If Mr. Carson knew what he let Jack do, he'd fire him on the spot."

"You want me to keep quiet about him letting Jack use the house as if he lived here?"

"If you can, yes."

Shayne stood up. "I'll try, Mrs. Carson. It all depends on how Jack used the place. If he was pulling anything, beyond impressing the ladies with his wealth, and using your home to do it, then it'll probably have to come out. I've got a client to think about."

"That—Glass girl? The one who stabbed poor Jack?"

"The one they think stabbed poor Jack. I'm beginning to get a picture of Jack that opens up a lot of new possibilities. But I'll protect Aldo as much as I can—and you."

Her blue eyes in the pale face watched the redhead for a moment. And for a moment Shayne saw some shadows deep down in those eyes. He didn't think that Mrs. James Carson was telling all.

XII

MIKE SHAYNE parked on the shoulder of the driveway near the gatehouse. The gatekeeper came out of the house to open the gate for him, then watched as Shayne left his car and strode toward him. The gatekeeper had small eyes in a fat face—shrewd little eyes that seemed to size Shayne up like a racetrack handicapper sizing up a horse. He was a small, thick-set man.



"You're the peeper, right?" the gatekeeper said.

"Mike Shayne."

"Aldo Cansoni, that's me. What's on your mind?"

"You don't seem all broken up over your son getting killed."

"Jack?" Aldo Cansoni spat the name, and then he laughed. "I ain't wasting tears on Jack, believe me. A crumb, Jack, all the way. He never give no time to anyone else his whole

rotten life, and he ain't worth the time to bury him."

"And you're his father?"

"I'm his old man. Only not really, see? I married his old lady when he was a kid. I'm his step-old man. He took my name, that's all. I never had much to do with him. He run off on his own when he was fourteen."

"But he showed up here."

Aldo Cansoni scowled. "He showed up to cause trouble for me a lot of times. He lived high and fast, Jack did, and every time he showed up it was a bad day for me."

"Then why did you let him use this place?"

The thick-set gatekeeper seemed to freeze. "Who says I let him use the place?"

"I do. So does Mrs. Carson."

The anger drained from Cansoni's fat face faster than it had come. "He had me on a barrel, Shayne. He been blackmailing me for years. He showed here, and he free-loaded off me a time. Then he got his big idea of playing like he was Carson's son. He had the same initials, you know, and that gave him the big idea."

"He was here with you for a time when he got the idea?"

"A couple weeks. He made me go to Mrs. Carson and ask for her help. She's a soft-hearted type, I guess, and maybe she liked Jack. Dames always liked Jack. Then he took off and got that hot-shot job with Hammill."

"You think the name change was just to get the job?"

Aldo Cansoni chewed on his lip,

and his shrewd little eyes studied Shayne. "No. I figure he was in some kind of trouble, too. Up in New York. He was nervous when he first showed here. I can tell. He was hiding out, I figure, and he had to take an alias anyway."

"What kind of barrel did he have you over?"

Cansoni snarled. "Oh no, mister. He had the screws on me, for years like, and now he's dead, and I'm off the hook. I ain't about to tell no one what he had. Him gettin' killed was a real break for me, and—"

The thick-set little man stopped with his mouth open. The light of sudden knowledge and fear spread through his eyes so clearly Shayne could almost see it. The step-father had suddenly realized that Shayne wouldn't be asking so many questions if he was satisfied that Maureen Glass was the killer. And blackmail was a hell of a good motive.

"A real break, Cansoni," Shayne said. "Maybe a break you arranged for yourself."

"No! I didn't do nothing! You got nothing."

The denial was too strong, too emphatic. Shayne studied the round, florid face of the thick little man, and suddenly he remembered the face Maureen Glass vaguely remembered in the lobby of Cansoni, alias John Carson's apartment the night of the murder.

"You were at Jack's place the night he was killed," the redhead

snapped. "You were in the lobby."

Cansoni licked his lips. "Okay. I was there. Only it don't do you no good. I saw that dame come out, see? She had blood all over, and she walked like she got only one leg and it was shaky. She seen me before, when she was out here, but she looks right at me and don't know me. That's all I saw, and I'll tell the cops that."

"Why did you go there, Aldo?"

"Why? To see if I could maybe get what Jack had on me. It was getting bad. He was using this place too damned much. Sooner or later he was gonna get caught. Then I was out, too. So I went to see if I could find the stuff he had on me. I figured he was on the run, too, and maybe I could put the screws on him if I kept my eyes open. That wasn't the first night I watched his place."

"What did you see, Aldo? Maybe you saw something was worth money—or you thought it was worth money."

"All I saw was that dame comin' out all bloody."

"She was out of it, Aldo," Shayne snapped. "She doesn't know what happened, and probably didn't know then was happening. Maybe you saw her bloody, but that doesn't prove a damn thing except that she was there. What else did you see? Who else was there that night?"

"Not a damn thing, peeper! And no one else was there, so you can go whistle!"

Shayne watched the thickset gate-

keeper and stepfather, and listened to him. The man was hiding something. He was sure of it. The anger was too much, too sharp. Aldo Cansoni wanted to stay far away from something, was terrified at being tied in on something.

"I'll find out what's going on, Aldo," Shayne said. "You can bet on that. You got me?"

"That dame killed him! Good riddance to a bum! Let it alone, Shayne."

Shayne just stared at the thick little man, watched him sweat, then turned and walked back to his car.

XIII

FROM THE CARSON estate, Mike Shayne drove back to the office. Lucy Hamilton had nothing to report. The redhead went into his private office and called Lieutenant Bellows.

"Yeah," Bellows said, "we checked on John Carson. His real name was Jack Cansoni, and he's got a pretty record up in New York—every racket charge in the book, and two counts of assault, but nothing ever stuck. The New York cops have no charges out on him, though, Mike. He was clean, and nothing changes the case against Maureen Glass. He was a bum all the way, but it looks like he got killed for jilting the dame only."

"Maybe," Shayne snapped, and hung up.

He tugged angrily on his left

earlobe. All right, Jack Cansoni was a bum and a gigolo, a preyer on women, a man who hid behind a phony name and carried two guns. Still, there was no way around the fact that what Maureen Glass had slowly begun to remember had, step-by-step, fitted with how Jack Cansoni had been killed. Every time she opened her mouth to remember more, it got worse for her.

If Shayne were George Bellow, he'd figure he had the case solved, too. But he wasn't Lieutenant Bellow. He was paid to believe in his client's innocence, and he was thinking about that money and the small leather books he had found in Jack Cansoni, alias John Carson's apartment.

He was still thinking about it when he felt the pangs of hunger—he had had no breakfast. He clapped his panama on his shock of red hair and told Lucy Hamilton he'd be back.

"Is it looking any better, Michael?" Lucy asked.

"I don't know, Angel. John Carson, alias Jack Cansoni, is looking worse, but I'm not sure how that helps Maureen. You better get in touch with my lawyer, ask him to stand by to defend Maureen in case I can't come up with anything."

He went down again and drove to Mario's. He wanted to ask Mario some questions, and the food was good. Over his lasagna he talked to the owner. Mario was nervous—he had heard from the police.

"That's too bad, about the girl and the blond guy. She looked nice, you know," Mario said.

Shayne said, "What about the guy?"

Mario shrugged. "Who knows? I seen him in here before. A kind of punk, I figure. Talked big, a lot of guff about how better New York is, what a big-shot he was, all that. I've seen his type."

"Did you see anyone else around them that night?"

"Around?" Mario said, "I don't know. The place was crowded. They were at the bar a while. Plenty of guys around. No one I saw special with them."

"Okay, Mario," Shayne said. "Now I want you to think good and give me a straight answer. Did Maureen drink enough that night to get falling-down drunk?"

"I don't know what it takes for her."

"She doesn't get drunk often. Anyway, before you had to toss them out, had she been drinking real heavily?"

Mario frowned, mopped at his face. "I tell you, Mr. Shayne, I ain't sure, only—. Well, I don't figure she drank so much here she'd get that bad. My bartenders ain't supposed to let anyone get that bad."

"You talked to your bartenders about it?"

"Sure I did, after. My barkeep swore he didn't serve her enough. He said she just got smashed like in a second. One minute she was okay,

the next she was a mess. That's just about when he called me to shut them off."

"Was the man as bad?"

"No. Pretty bad, but not so bad."

"Thanks, Mario," Shayne said.

He paid his check and walked out into the afternoon Miami sun. A hunch was forming in his mind, a hunch that came from his disbelief in chance. When you came down to it, it was pure chance, and long odds, that Jack Cansoni, all-around punk from New York who looked like he might be hiding, and a man who blackmailed his own stepfather, had been killed by a drunken girl in a fit of jealousy. It looked like there ought to be a lot of people with better reasons to kill Jack Cansoni.

He was thinking hard when he reached his car and started to climb into the driver's seat.

He stopped half in.

Something registered in his mind. Something he had seen and yet not quite seen.

He got back out of the car and walked backward away from it. His gray eyes studied the car. He saw nothing special, nothing different.

And yet his mind told him that there was something different, something wrong.

He began to walk around the car. He went all around once without seeing it.

Then he stopped near the rear. There were marks in the gravel of Mario's parking lot as if someone had slid under his car. And a wire dangled

down from the vicinity of the exhaust pipe.

Shayne crawled under.

He lay looking up at the tube pushed into the exhaust pipe—a long metal tube with the wire dangling from one end out the exhaust.

His car had been wired for a bomb in the exhaust.

He lay there for some minutes, a cold sweat on his grim face, and just stared up at the efficient little bomb. If he had not spotted the careless wire he would have been blown sky high the instant he stepped on the starter.

If the bomber hadn't carelessly left the telltale marks in the gravel for him to see, he would have been dead now.

He mopped the sweat from his face as he disconnected the bomb and eased it out of the exhaust.

Then he crawled out on his back and stood up holding the bomb. It was a professional job, first-rate. Only the installation had been sloppy—a hurried job in broad daylight.

Shayne put the de-fused bomb in his trunk and got back into the car. His face was a grim mask now. He was sure of one thing—there was more in the death of Jack Cansoni than anyone in Miami knew. And he was sure of one more thing—the answer was in New York.

XIV

THE JET LANDED Mike Shayne at Kennedy International just after

six P.M. that night. He picked up his rental car and drove straight to Centre Street. His old friend Captian McGuire was in his office in detective division. McGuire held out a beefy hand that had the grip of an elephant.

"Damn, Mike, we don't see enough of you up here."

"You're sure that's bad, Captain?" Shayne grinned.

McGuire laughed. "You got a point. Maybe we don't need any more P.I.'s around here to gum up the works. What's on your mind? Jack The Dude? Cansoni?"

"You're too smart to be a cop."

"Not so smart. Miami checked Cansoni with us early today. Bellows said you were in on it."

"With a client up to her neck and ready to believe she killed Cansoni."

"She?" McGuire said. "It figured. Jack Cansoni had to get killed by a woman, Mike."

"Tell me about him, Captain."

McGuire shrugged. "What's to tell? The story's so old we could both write it in the same words in our sleep. A kid from a busted home: father a con, mother a tramp, step-father a punk who'd gamble on anything that ran. At fourteen on his own; at sixteen in juvenile court; at twenty-one in Auburn; since then charged with most racket charges in the book, but no convictions."

"An apprentice who took his lumps and graduated into the big time smart and skillful," Shayne said.

"That was Jack—except for the

one specialty, the women. He was always a man for the dolls."

"How about the racket charges? Was he a member of the syndicate?"

"We thought so. On the bottom."

"But you had no charge out on him now?"

"No. We knew he'd sort of dropped out of sight, but we weren't looking hard for him."

"When did he drop out?"

"About a year ago."

"Any ideas why?"

McGuire dug a big pipe from his pocket, worked on it, found his tobacco pouch. "Ideas, sure. A couple or three. Rumor had it he tried to move up too far too fast and stepped on some toes, but that rumor you hear about anyone in the mob who vanishes. Then we heard he'd been playing around with the wrong woman, the woman of a bigger monkey. Finally, we got a hint some important data was missing and floating around."

"You believe any of it?"

"About Jack Cansoni? Sure, the woman bit."

"Whose woman?"

"Rumor said Manny DiNada's doxie."

"I never heard of DiNada."

"He's only medium-sized but a lot bigger than Jack. He runs a construction company for a front."

"What company?"

"Timberline Building and Lumber."

Shayne dug out one of the cards he had found in Jack Carson, alias

Cansoni's flat. It was for Timberline Building. Then he thought about the three leather books he'd found.

"What data was supposed to be missing?"

McGuire shook his head. "That no one tells us and stays alive long, Mike."

Shayne sat there and thought about it for a time. Jack Cansoni was a small-time member of the rackets. He vanishes from New York, where he'd operated all his life, and surfaces in Miami.

He puts the screws on his stepfather. He changes his name. He has money, and three leather books with names, numbers and code entries. His ever-loving stepfather suddenly begins to act as if he maybe has something on Jack. Jack is in some kind of bind. Jack dies and everything points to a young girl who never hurt a fly, and who suddenly got blind drunk when she rarely drank. And then someone tried to kill him with a bomb.

"How do I find this DiNada, Captain?"

"You don't."

"What was the name of the woman Cansoni was supposed to have made a play for?"

"Mimi Dare. She sings, if you can call it that, at *The Green Onion*," McGuire said.

"Thanks, Captain."

"Be smart, Mike. If you get near DiNada, and you've got any ideas against him, call me first."

"I will."

He left McGuire puffing hard on the pipe and not looking like it tasted very good.

XV

THE GREEN ONION was a small supper club on the fringe of the big time. The street in front was lighted and elegant, but there were back alleys that were out of the high-rent district. The picture of a fawn-eyed blond in green tights and not much else decorated the entrance—life-size. It was Mimi Dare.

Mike Shayne went in. The bartender in the miniature bar yawned as he asked what Shayne wanted.

"A sidcar, and some talk with Mimi Dare."

"You're line's as old as your drink. The sidcar I can get, if I can remember how to make it."

"Try forgetting the patter, and just tell Miss Dare Mike Shayne from Miami wants to talk to her about Jack."

"Even your style's out of the movies, friend," the bartender said, "but I'll pass the message."

Shayne looked around the dim club as he waited. Business was good. All the tables were filled and the show wasn't even on. His sidcar came, in a small glass for a big price.

"What happened to Miss Dare?"

"I passed the message," the bartender said.

Shayne sensed something wrong. The bartender's ancient patter was gone. The man seemed nervous, un-



easy, and his voice carried no more flip style or humor. Before Shayne could open his mouth to get the bartender back, two shapes materialized from the dim light of the club and slid to either side of him.

"Evenin', Mr. Shayne," one of them said. His hand was in his pocket, and the pocket touched Shayne's ribs. It was a very hard pocket.

"We'd like to talk about Jack," the gunman said. "Just step up, pay the tab, and we'll walk out the way you came in."

Shayne paid the tab. They walked. At the door the second man who had not spoken a word stopped for a moment to talk low and hard to the doorman. The doorman nodded, and stepped to open the door.

The doorman crossed between Shayne and the second man for a split second. Shayne didn't wait. He grabbed the first gunman's arm with his left, spun him, and chopped his right down hard on the man's inner elbow.

The gunman grunted and his arm went limp.

The doorman jumped away. Shayne shoved the first gunman into the second. They both went down all arms and flailing legs. Shayne went out the door on the run.

In the street he turned away from his car, and pounded down the lighted street through the early night crowd. He did not look back until he reached the first corner.

They were after him.

He ducked around the corner and slipped into an alley. They came running by. Shayne waited in the alley, crouched in the first dark doorway. They would have to separate at the next corner. One would run on, the other would come back.

It was the first gunman, the one he had arm-chopped, who came back, peered into the alley, then eased his way in. Shayne waited in the dark doorway. Nine out of ten times the man would overlook the first doorway, his eyes straining to see far ahead where he expected a fleeing man to be waiting and hiding.

The gunman did miss the first doorway. The instant he was two feet past, Shayne moved. The gunman never heard him. He dropped him with one blow to the back of the neck. Then he took his gun and dropped it in a garbage can.

Then he went back to *The Green Onion*—but not to the front door.

He circled the club to the alley where the stage entrance showed its single bare light. He drew his auto-

matic, and slipped past the stage entrance. He looked through the alley for an open window, or one he could open himself. He found his open window three down from the stage entrance.

He eased it up and slipped through into a storeroom. The door of the room was open, and moments later Shayne stood in the narrow backstage corridor of *The Green Onion*. Everything was quiet. In the distance, like some weird and far-off celebration, he heard the sounds of the floor show that must have just gone on.

The sounds of the audience were like the roar of a pack of wild animals. His gun ready, he moved along the corridor. If the show had just gone on, Mimi Dare might be waiting for her entrance in her dressing room. If she was on stage already, he could wait for her to come off.

Her dressing room was not hard to find. It was the one with the star, and her name, at the far end of a short side corridor far from the stage. It was silent, deserted. Shayne slipped to the door. A line of light showed from under the door. He looked around, saw that he was alone, and opened the door.

He jumped inside and closed the door behind him. His gray eyes took in the whole room. It was empty. Water ran behind a closed door to the right. Shayne stepped lightly to the door. There was no sound but the slow throb of the running water. Shayne opened this door.

Mimi Dare lay in a small bathtub. Water ran on her face. Water that mixed with the blood that poured from her cut wrists. Shayne bent over her. The blood did not come from her wrists alone. Her throat had been cut, too. Shayne did not have to be told that he was too late.

Her eyelids fluttered, opened. She looked up at him from somewhere on the other side of death already. Fear was etched in her eyes. Not pain, she was far beyond that. Only fear of the end that was only seconds away from her.

"Mimi," Shayne said, "who did it? Why?"

She seemed to shake her head as if all that really didn't matter any more. She was dead. What did it matter who had made her dead? Her lips moved so faintly Shayne barely saw the motion. He did not hear the sound, if there was sound.

He leaned his ear close to the sighing lips. He heard a faint gurgling, bubbling sound of wind and liquid as far off as the macabre sounds of the blatant floor show that would wait for her to appear forever.

"... Jack. . . Jack. . . Miami. . . they killed. . ."

The eyes were closed when he raised up, no more sounds from the bubbling blood, and as he watched they slowly opened in the final movement Mimi Dare would ever make.

They stared up at Shayne, sightless now, and the redhead stood up

over her. She seemed to grow smaller even as he watched.

There were no other sounds anywhere.

He did not wait for sounds to come.

He got out of there.

XVI

MIKE SHAYNE caught the first jet out for Miami in the morning. McGuire and his men were on Mimi Dare's murder. Shayne had reported it, and they had found her stiff there in her bathtub. There were no witnesses, no clues, no one who would even whisper a hint of a guess. The two gunmen Shayne had mixed with did not exist, not as far as the bartender or anyone else at *The Green Onion* was concerned.

"No one'll even think who killed her," McGuire said bitterly. "DiNada has to be behind it, and no one'll even tell himself that for fear he'll talk in his sleep and DiNada'll hear."

DiNada had an alibi, of course. So did every hood who the police could connect to the racketeer. Shayne left McGuire to the thankless job. He had a different matter on his mind, and he had some guesses he risked telling himself.

All the way down on the jet, and into his office in his car, he kept one eye on his rearview mirror. He did not think he was being followed, but he couldn't be sure. As far as he knew no one knew he had found Mimi, or that the murdered girl had

lived long enough to make her whisper: . . . Jack . . . Jack . . . Miami . . . they killed. . . .”

But he knew, and it was enough to make him nervous all the way.

At his office, Lucy Hamilton had no news.

“The police say they still think it’s Maureen, Michael. They haven’t found anything to point to anyone else.”

“Maybe I have, Angel,” Shayne said grimly.

He stopped only long enough to shave, shower and have some breakfast. Then he got into his car and drove out to the estate of James Carson. The gates were closed and locked. He honked his horn, but Aldo Cansoni did not appear from the gatehouse. Shayne got out of his car.

He circled around outside the high fence. He had had a hunch ever since he had talked to Aldo that the thickset man knew more than he had told. All the way down on the jet he had been sure he knew what Aldo knew, what Aldo had seen—and done.

Now he was not surprised that this stepfather was long gone. But he had to be sure. He studied the high fence and was sure that it was not electrified. Then he found holds and climbed up and over. He dropped down on the far side and walked warily up to the door.

It was open. He walked in, his automatic ready. This time he did not have to search for who he want-

ed. Aldo Cansoni was there as he walked in. That was all that was different from when he had walked in on Mimi Dare.

The thickset little man sat in a stuffed armchair with his throat like a gaping mouth in the face of a laughing clown. Aldo Cansoni was not laughing—unless he had a sense of humor that operated beyond the grave.

Shayne touched the dead man. The body was cold. Whatever Aldo had done, or known, was his secret now. Unless he had left some message.

Shayne searched. There was no message he could read, no clues, nothing but silence and the remains of a small, crooked, gambler’s life.

But the dead man himself was message enough. Maureen Glass had not killed Jack Cansoni. Aldo Cansoni had not killed his stepson, but Aldo had known who the killer was.

The door creaked behind Shayne. He didn’t wait to ask who it was. He made a dive for cover, rolled up with his automatic pointing at the door, and saw Mrs. Adelle Carson swaying in the doorway. Her eyes were enormous, pale blue pools of horror without any depth at all. They seemed to shine like reflecting surfaces.

An animal sound escaped her lips. “Ohhhhh—ahh—gggg. . . .”

Shayne came up from his cover warily. Both her hands were in front of her now, stretched out as if to ward off a blow. Shayne holstered

his pistol. He walked to the aristocratic woman. She hardly seemed to notice him, her pale eyes fixed toward the body of Aldo Casoni.

"Mrs. Carson?" Shayne said quietly.

She didn't answer, swayed there in the doorway. Then she pushed past him, brushed him aside with her hands as if he were some inanimate object, and almost ran to the dead man. She stood over Aldo, and her lips skinned back in a savage leer of hate, and she spat in the dead man's face.

Shayne jumped to her.

Her arms flailed to ward him off as she still stared down at the seated dead man.

"Dead, dead, dead!" she cried, screamed down. "I'm glad they killed you! Glad! I wish I'd killed you!"

Shayne tried to hold her, pull her away. "Mrs. Carson."

She fought him off, her face turning always toward the dead stepfather like a flower following the sun. "They killed him! Just as they killed poor Jack! They killed him, but he killed my Jack! He killed my Jack!"

The woman was hysterical, in a fog, half insane. Shayne watched her and saw what he had suspected from the start—she was one of Jack Casoni's victims, too. It had to be.

"You were in love with Jack Casoni? He killed him."

"Love? Yes, love. With Jack. He killed him."

"You let Jack come here, pose as your husband's son, use the house, because you were in love with him?"

She had lapsed back into her trance. "He loved me, you see? My Jack. James is an old man; I had to have Jack, you see? I had to help him. Then this—this killed him."

"How did Aldo kill him, Mrs. Carson?"

"Adelle," she said, blinking. "Call me Adelle, Jack. I'm a young woman. I'm not old. I'm not old yet. I'm Adelle, Jack darling."

"How did Aldo kill Jack, Adelle?" Shayne said.

She looked around, a cunning look on her face. Her slender body hunched furtively as if she were hiding somewhere. Shayne realized that she was acting something out—a memory. Her cunning eyes scanned the room.

Her voice was a whisper: "I saw him there, in that lobby. Where Jack lived, you see? I saw him hiding in the lobby. They came, Jack and that girl. She was drunk, staggering. It was disgusting. Then I saw him!"

"You saw Aldo in the lobby of Jack Casoni's apartment house on the night he was killed?"

"I saw him talk to them. The two men. Awful, horrible men. I know that kind of man. They never smile, you see? They had guns, I could tell. Aldo talked to them, sent them up. I saw him."

"Aldo fingered Jack for some gunmen," Shayne said. "Is that what you're telling me, Mrs. Carson?"

"Adelle," she said. "He sent them up to kill Jack! I saw him. I saw them bring the girl out, down the stairs. They were carrying her. I thought she was dead, too, but she wasn't. Only my Jack was dead."

"You saw them bring Maureen Glass down? You saw them bring Jack's body down?"

"My Jack, they killed him!"

Her voice rose to a sudden scream, and she collapsed on the floor.

Shayne watched her for a full minute. Her breathing was shallow. The redhead looked at the body of Aldo Cansoni, and he knew what the thickset little man had been hiding. He had fingered his stepson for two killers, sent without a doubt by DiNada in New York, and had hoped to get free of the blackmail that way. Instead all he had gotten free of was his life.

Shayne strode to the house phone and told the butler to get someone down for Mrs. Carson. He told the butler to get the police. Then he left.

XVII

THE GARAGE MAN, Forbes, was under a car as Mike Shayne strode into the garage where Maureen Glass had had her car fixed the day of the murder. Forbes came out when Shayne stood over him. The garage-man stood up wiping his greasy hands on a rag. His eyes did not look at Shayne.

"Maureen Glass never picked up

her car that night," Shayne said bluntly. "You never saw her that night."

"You must be crazy," Forbes said. The garage man tried to make his voice hard and angry. He failed. Shayne heard the fear under the fake anger.

"She couldn't have driven the car," Shayne said. "She wasn't drunk, she was drugged. She was out. They had to carry her."

"She was here," Forbes said. "She signed the receipt. I got the entry on my ticket. She drove out when I told her not to take the car. She was bombed."

"No," Shayne said. "It's a lie all the way. She was never here. The receipt is a crude forgery. The ticket is a fake. The car was taken, but not by her. It was taken by two men with guns, Forbes, and they told you what to say when people came asking."

"You can't prove a thing!" Forbes cried, all the anger gone, only the naked fear left.

"Maureen was seen being carried out of Cansoni's apartment. She got drunk too quickly at Mario's for it to have been booze. Someone slipped her a knockout dose at Mario's. The same someone killed Jack Cansoni, and set up a frame on Maureen, telling her all the things she was going to remember vaguely later."

Forbes went as white as a dead fish's belly. "Someone saw her? No, they—"

"Yes," Shayne snapped, "and



that doesn't really matter anyway. Cansoni had a stepfather who set him up for them, the killers. He's telling it all. I've traced them, Forbes. They're working for Manny DiNada. They've killed twice more already."

Forbes was so pale Shayne was afraid he would drop dead on the spot in a pool of his own grease. The man held onto the fender of the car he had been under. He licked his lips.

"They made me tell it," Forbes whispered. "Two of them. They come in for the car. They made me

lie. They fixed up the receipt and the ticket. They said if I didn't lie I was dead, and if I ever told I was dead."

Forbes glanced around as if he expected to see death itself walk into the garage. "And I'm dead, you know? Finished. Where do I run? Ain't nowhere to run now, nowhere to hide. They'll get me. They always do."

"No, not if you tell the truth. I'll have the cops here in a few minutes. Now I want you to tell—"

Shayne got no farther.

Death did walk into that garage.

Death in the form of two short, dark men in topcoats despite the hot sun outside. There was no sun inside the dim garage, and the two men were creatures of the darkness.

They came in fast, spreading out.

Forbes cried out, his eyes whirling in panic. Shayne grabbed him and made a dash for the cover of the office. The two men had their guns out. Shayne pushed Forbes into a grease pit and made a dive for a car. He hit in a pool of grease and slid behind the car as two shots shattered the dim interior of the garage.

Unhit, Shayne lay flat behind the car, his automatic out. In the garage nothing moved. Shayne crawled under the car and up to the front under the front wheels. He lay and waited.

For a long time he saw and heard nothing. The other men in the garage had all run or gone into hiding. The two gunmen were careful men. Shayne sweated where he lay. Then

he saw the legs. One of the gunmen was working up on his left near the office. Shayne waited. The legs emerged into the open, began to move straight toward the car where the redhead lay.

He took careful aim at a spot above the legs he could not see, and fired three short, sharp shots.

The gunman screamed and fell. His whole body came into view, falling, his arms clasped around his thighs. He hit on his exposed chin. He screamed again, and lay writhing in agony from the bullets in his thighs.

"I'm bleeding! Bleeding! Help!" the gunman bawled in terror as the blood spurted from his riddled thighs.

Shayne heard the other man running behind him. Under the car he flopped over, tried to work around to face the new attack.

He saw he would not make it.

He saw the face of the gunman who lay flat, his pistol aimed straight under the car at Shayne.

He saw the man's trigger finger move, tighten.

Forbes appeared, a crankshaft in his hands. Forbes raised the crankshaft in both shaking hands. The gunman lying flat with his gun ready to kill Shayne never saw Forbes or the massive crankshaft that slammed down on his head.

The pistol flew from his hand. He screamed, tried to crawl, and lay still.

Forbes dropped the crankshaft,

sat down heavily, and was sick on the garage floor.

Shayne crawled out from under the car. The shot gunman was still bawling for help, bleeding badly. The other gunman lay unmoving. Forbes sat shaking, vomiting. Shayne went to the aid of the gunman he had shot. As he stopped the bleeding with a tourniquet, he told the returning garage attendants to call the police.

XVIII

GEORGE BELLOWS and his men sat with Mike Shayne in the garage office. Forbes had told his story. The M.E. was still working over the man Forbes had hit, and who had his skull fractured. The gunman Shayne had shot, his bleeding stopped, lay on a stretcher smoking and waiting to be taken away.

"Your name's Sando Gregor?"

Bellows asked the smoking gunman.

"You got it, cop," Gregor said.

"You work for Manny DiNada?"

"You know it, I know it, only no one proves it for the record," Gregor said with a shrug that made him wince with the pain in his thighs. He looked at Shayne, openly, without hate.

"Cute trick, shooting under the car. You figured the bomb, too, right? Yeah, that was a lousy job. You got brains for a peeper."

Shayne shrugged. "Jack Cansoni made time with Mimi Dare, right? DiNada didn't like that. That was a

year ago. DiNada got after Cansoni a year ago, and Jack ran.”

“Yeah,” Gregor said, smoked. “Jack ran like a hot-tailed rabbit; you bet he did. The boss let him go, then he found out Jack took some books along with him. That was bad, you know? That got the boss real mad. So we started looking. We didn’t do no good for a long time, not before someone remembered Jack got a stepfather down here. We come down. We find the old man, and he gives us the big hello! He don’t like Jack much himself, see, so he tells us all, and he fingers Jack for us.”

“You found Cansoni at Mario’s Restaurant, and doped his and Maureen Glass’s drinks. Only it didn’t take all the way with Cansoni. He got to a cab and gave you the slip. Then Aldo took his chance and fingered Jack again by leading you to the apartment. You went up and killed Jack.”

“You got it all right, peeper,” Gregor admitted, “except we don’t kill Jack, see? I mean, we got up there and he was dead like already. All cut up on the floor. The broad was there, too, that Maureen chick. She was out cold on the floor. I guess we slipped her a pretty big dose.”

Gregor laughed, and gritted his teeth with pain as the laugh shook his body. “We figured the broad’d done our job for us. So we set up the frame on her. It was easy like. Primo over there, he talked to her in her pad before he tucked her in to sleep

it off. I hear she remembered real good. We set it all up fine.”

Gregor looked at Shayne. “Only you come along. You beat us.”

“Why did you leave those books and the money?”

Gregor arched an eyebrow. “Hell, man, we was framing up the girl, see? So we don’t want it to look like no robbery. I mean, maybe someone knew Jack had all that loot on him. And we don’t want no one finding us in the picture, so we got to leave the books in case Jack told someone he got them, see?”

“Pretty dumb, Gregor, Lieutenant Bellows said. “Those books will prove DiNada had a motive.”

Gregor looked pained. “Hell, Lieutenant, we ain’t that dumb. Those ain’t the same books. We switched books, see? Those books you got don’t lead you to the boss. He’s clean. I mean, all this I’m tellin’ you don’t mean beans. I ain’t gonna tell it for the record.”

There was a silence in the garage office. They had switched books, there was no proof against DiNada after all. But that was not what Shayne was thinking about.

“You didn’t kill Jack Cansoni?” he said.

“Nope, not us. Like I said, we figured the girl done our job for us, so we set her up to take the fall. That was it.”

“And Mimi Dare? Aldo?”

“Mimi knew too much. You was nosing around too close. We figured the tramp better get shut up. Only

you don't prove that, neither. The old man knew too much, too. You know, all you got on us is trying to get you and the grease monkey. Assault with intent, that's all you got on us, and the boss'll get us off light. Read it and weep, coppers."

Bellows swore. "You think we're going to believe you didn't kill Jack Cansoni? Forget it. You killed him, and we'll prove it."

Gregor shrugged. "Go ahead and try, Lieutenant. Only I'm telling you, we didn't do it. Jack was dead when we got up there."

"You're lying," Bellows snapped. "Are you trying to tell us that Maureen Glass killed Cansoni after all? What about the knife?"

"Like I said, we set up the frame, we admit that. The knife was right there in Jack's pad. We took it, sure, but that's all. We don't need no knife handy to do our work, cop."

"Then Maureen Glass did kill him after all?" Bellows said, and the lieutenant looked at Shayne.

Shayne nodded slowly. "I think they didn't kill him, George. I think Gregor is telling the truth. But Maureen didn't kill him, either."

"Then who the hell did?" Bellows roared.

Shayne stood up. "Let's go and find out."

XIX

THE GATES TO THE mammoth estate of James Carson were wide open this time. The other team of



police were still there working on the gatehouse. They saluted as Lieutenant Bellows and Mike Shayne drove through the gate and up the long driveway to the white, frame mansion with its grotesque gingerbread from a past age.

There were police at the house. The butler let them in, under the watchful eye of a sergeant who came alert as Bellows walked in.

"Where's Carson and his wife?" Bellows asked.

"Upstairs. They got a doc for the missus," the sergeant said.

Shayne and Bellows went on upstairs. James Carson came to meet them as they entered the bedroom where Adelle Carson lay on the bed with a white-haired man talking soft-

ly to her and deftly manipulating shiny instruments from his black bag.

"What do you two want?" Carson demanded. "My wife is ill. I'll have to insist that you leave at once!"

Bellows shook his head. "Can't be done, Mr. Carson. We've caught the men who killed your gatekeeper."

"I really don't have much interest in that," Carson snapped.

Shayne said, "They killed Aldo, Mr. Carson, but they didn't kill Jack Cansoni."

Carson blinked at the redhead. His immaculate suit seemed to bristle, and his iron-gray hair stiffened. He didn't say a word for a full minute. Then he nodded, and walked out into the next room. The two detectives followed him. In the next room, the millionaire turned on them.

"Who did kill Cansoni, Mr. Shayne?" he said quietly.

"Jack Cansoni was a lady-killer, Mr. Carson," Shayne said. "He had women on his string everywhere. Women liked him. He wasn't very careful which woman he played with, was he?"

Carson seemed to think for a time. "No, he wasn't. You mean my wife, I take it? She was one of this Cansoni's string, as you call it?"

"She was," Shayne said, "and you knew she was."

"No," Carson said, "I didn't know she was until today. She did make brief trips into the city from the Bahamas, but I had no idea it was to meet Cansoni."

"Can you prove that, Mr. Carson?" Bellows said.

Carson gave the lieutenant a slow glance. "No, how can I? Unless you will accept proof that I myself never left the islands until we came back here together."

Shayne said, "I'll accept it, Carson. You didn't kill Jack Cansoni. Only one other person was there that night. By her own admission she was there and saw Cansoni, Maureen, the gunmen, and Aldo. She told me the whole truth—except that she didn't put it in the right order, and she forgot to mention the main fact."

Carson said, "And what fact was that, Mr. Shayne?"

"That there was a time lag between when she saw Cansoni go up with Maureen, and when she saw the two gunmen and Aldo show up. In that time lag, she went up to the apartment, and she killed Jack Cansoni!"

Bellows said, "With Maureen right there?"

"Maureen had passed out from the mixture of whisky and drugs," Shayne said. "Cansoni was about out. She killed him easy, and then she went back down. That was when she saw the gunmen and Aldo. She recognized Aldo, of course, so she waited around and saw them come back down with Maureen."

"Why would she kill him, Mr. Shayne?" Carson demanded. "As I understood, she was doing a lot for him."

"Yeah, but she probably caught

him using your own house to entertain Maureen Glass. I guess she just flipped."

They all heard the noise in the doorway from the bedroom. They turned. Adelle Carson stood there as pale as the day she was born, and wearing not much more than she had that day. Her ripe body, out of its aristocratic clothes, was clear and soft through her nightgown.

Carson stepped to her. "Don't say anything, Adelle! They have no proof at all. All they have is what you said while you were half hysterical. They can't prove anything. I can get you off completely!"

Neither Shayne nor Bellows spoke. Adelle Carson stood there, and her pale blue eyes turned slowly to stare straight at her husband. Carson seemed to fall back from the cold force of the look.

Adelle said, "With your money? You'll save me with your money? I

married you for your money. I paid for that. I hate you. I loved Jack. I still love him. I don't want to live. He brought them here, his women, to my home. He brought them to my bedroom where he brought me."

Carson cried, "Adelle! Please! Don't say anything more!"

"I hate you and your money. I hate you. I killed Jack Cansoni, but I loved him. I killed him! You hear? I killed him, you old man!"

Her voice rose to a scream. Carson stood there for another moment. Then he turned and walked out of the room.

Lieutenant Bellows began to tell Adelle Carson of her rights. She didn't listen. Bellows called for his men.

Mike Shayne left. He went down to his car to drive to his office and tell Lucy Hamilton the good news. To tell Maureen Glass that her big night was over at last.

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THE TOMB AT THE TOP OF THE TREES

by

EDWARD

D.

HOCH

"He—he climbed up that tree," the girl said. "After awhile, we looked for him. He—he never came down. Nobody ever saw him again alive. . ."

SHE HELD OUT her firm young Shand in greeting. "Welcome to Larabee College. I'm Judith Spring, of the English Department," she said.

I took the hand and gave her my best visiting-author smile. "If the entire faculty is as charming as you, it's going to be a most pleasant visit."

She led the way out of the railroad station and threaded a path between parked cars.

"Hardly anyone comes here by

train anymore," she told him over her shoulder, "but the airport is so inconvenient the train's almost faster."

"It was faster for me," I agreed, opening the door of a mud-splattered station wagon she indicated. "You're only two hours by train. "

"I was supposed to get the car washed for the famous George Gordon, but I didn't have time. You won't tell on me, will you?"



"Certainly not." I felt comfortable with her. She was the first real person I'd met in months. "And I hope you won't tell me you've read all my books."

The car started with a jerk and they turned out of the station parking lot amidst a shower of wind-blown leaves. "No, and I haven't even assigned them to my Con-

temporary Literature classes. But I did read your latest last week, after I heard you were coming."

"Ah! *The Necessities of Literature*. A real pot-boiler, I must confess. I wrote most of those essays years ago, and some of them, like the Hemingway one, are quite dated now."

"You're very frank," she observed.

"Certainly." I lit a cigarette and gazed out at the autumn colors. "New England is beautiful in October. You must like teaching at Larabee."

"I like teaching girls, but the town does have its drawbacks. There's one movie theatre, and a bowling alley, and a sort of roadhouse. You have to drive halfway to Boston for any excitement."

"College towns aren't usually very exciting places."

"Larabee Falls certainly isn't. At least over in Grovedale they have an occasional bank robbery. Nothing ever happens here except some bonfires on Halloween."

"Maybe I can liven things up," I told her. "At least for the coming weekend."

I'd been teaching for ten years at various liberal arts colleges in the northeast, but it wasn't until publication of my two collections of essays and criticism that I'd begun to get invitations to lecture.

My wife back in New York snorted when they came from girls' colleges—as they often did—and

claimed it was only a plot to get a handsome young author on campus for a few days. At thirty-eight, I wasn't all that handsome or that young, but there may have been some truth in what she said. Ever since the days of Dylan Thomas and his memorable campus tours during the early 1950's, a legend had grown up about visiting authors at women's colleges.

Actually, Larabee was both larger and handsomer than I'd expected. The ivy-clad buildings sprawled away from a central quadrangle, reaching down a gently sloping hill almost to the edge of an idyllic woods. Judith Spring deposited me before the main administration building, which faced and balanced a great domed library across the quad. I knew at once it was a campus at which I'd like to teach.

"There are lots of people for you to meet," Judith warned, and there were indeed.

I started out with the dean, a large woman who seemed never to smile, and passed on the head of the English Department and my official host. Professor Ted Langworth was tall, balding, and friendly, with just enough of a twinkle in his eyes to make any homesick freshman fall in love with him.

"I've admired your work, Gordon," he said, falling into the last-name bit as easily as if I were one of his students. "Someone told me you once wrote mystery novels. That true?"

"I published a couple in paper covers about ten years ago."

Langworth grunted. "I suppose Miss Spring told you about our famous campus mystery?"

"No. As a matter of fact—"

At my side, Judith Spring seemed oddly flustered. "I didn't want to bore him with that old story."

"Well, get her to tell it to you later," Langworth insisted. "It might give you an idea for a new novel." Then we were joined by a number of other faculty members and the conversation shifted to literary topics.

The day passed quickly as I was shown around and spoke briefly with groups of girl students neatly attired in bermuda shorts and shirts. They all seemed charming and quite intelligent. It was that sort of a place.

Dinner at the dean's home went well, too, and afterwards I found myself with Judith Spring once more, making conversation in a corner during a lull in my literary pronouncements. "What was this about your famous campus mystery?"

"What?" She glanced away. "Oh, that was just Professor Langworth. He dramatizes everything."

I sipped my drink, a weak punch fitting to the occasion. "What happened, anyway? One of your girls get in trouble?"

"No, nothing like that. One of the faculty members disappeared. It was over a year ago now."

There was something about her manner that kept me pressing for-

ward. The carefree girl who'd met my train had been replaced by a tense, evasive woman.

"Tell me about it. Or is there some dark secret?"

"No, not at all. It was in the newspapers. His name was Glen—Glen Yeaver. He disappeared during a department picnic."

"He never turned up?"

"No, never." She stubbed out her cigarette and promptly lit another one. "We'll be going out to the same place tomorrow," she said after a moment. "You can see just where it happened."

"Where what happened?"

"Well, of course it's foolish, but some of the girls have always insisted that he climbed to the top of a tree and just vanished up there."

AFTER DINNER they escorted me to the auditorium, where I addressed some four hundred girls on current trends in American literature. It was a talk I'd given on the average of once a month all year, but it always got a good response. I finished up with a question period that was lively and satisfactory, and left them wanting more.

I soon learned that one of the duties of a visiting author at Larabee was to attend the senior class fall frolic on the afternoon following my talk. It was held, traditionally, at a picnic grove in the woods adjoining the campus.

The day was warm and sunny, one of those golden October

afternoons when the woods are full of falling leaves and the crunch of them underfoot is the sound full of memories and vague delight. The girls had brought my food, and there was plenty of beer for everyone. I had to admit I was enjoying it.

Somewhere in the midst of the afternoon, Professor Langworth wandered over. "Having a good time, Gordon?"

"Great! You people really know how to entertain a visitor."

"Did Judith tell you about our mystery?"

"A little," I admitted. "Not a great deal."

"That's the tree, right over there." He indicated a massive oak with a number of low branches. A good tree for climbing.

"She said he went up that and never came down."

"Well, that's what the story is, but of course it couldn't be true. There were all sorts of rumors—that he'd run off with one of his students, or somehow embezzled money from the college—but the truth of it is that he just disappeared. We searched the woods for two days. Had the boy scouts out and everything."

"This was a year ago?"

"A bit more, the end of September. I remember the leaves were still on the trees. Here's Susan. She was under the tree the whole time, when he was supposed to be up in it. Susan! Can you come over here a minute?"

The girl who joined us was slim and pretty, a bright-eyed blonde with bare feet and painted toenails. She looked at me a bit shyly and extended one hand. "Pleased to meet you, Mr. Gordon. I thought that was a marvelous lecture you gave last evening."

"It should be," I replied honestly. "I've practiced it long enough."

Her name was Susan Doud, and she was vice-president of the senior class. With a little urging from Professor Langworth, she quickly recalled the events of the previous autumn.

"I was only a junior then, of course, and it wasn't a senior picnic. It was an English Department affair, really, and there were perhaps twenty of us who attended as faculty guests. I remember that it was a Friday, the last Friday in September. I came early with Cindy McGee, and we were talking with Mr. Yeaver for a long time. Then, just after lunch, he went up in his tree."

"His tree?"

"Well, he had this thing about the tree, see? He'd climb up in it, way up to the top, and stretch out on a limb and go to sleep. We used to tell he he'd fall off and kill himself. All the girls were in love with him, of course. He was twenty-eight and unmarried, and really groovy."

"Could you see him from the ground?"

"Part of the time, but the leaves were pretty thick. We'd call up to him, though."

I stared up at the tree, which towered some eighty feet toward the hazy blue sky. It was taller than any of the trees around it, and its branches did not quite touch any of them. Even a Tarzan would have had difficulty swinging from the great oak to one of the other trees. For an English instructor, I would have said it was impossible.

"This whole thing is beginning to interest me," I admitted. "Suppose you tell me everything that happened the afternoon he disappeared, as well as you can remember it."

A little distance away, some of the girls had gathered around a guitar to sing. Langworth went off to join them, but Susan Doud sat cross-legged on the ground opposite me, anxious to recount the events of Larabee's big mystery.

"Well, as I said, it was a sunny Friday morning, and there were about twenty students and the English Department faculty—Professor Langworth, Miss Spring, Mr. Yeaver, and a few others. After lunch, Mr. Yeaver said he was going up in his tree to sleep for a while. When he tried to sleep on the ground, the girls were always tickling his nose or pouring water on him. He was that sort of person. But none of us could climb quite as high as he could, and we never followed him all the way to the top of the tree. So we just stayed around the bottom, singing and drinking beer."

"But you must have left the tree at some point," I insisted.



"No, that's just the thing! Professor Langworth has always said it's impossible, that he must have climbed down when we weren't looking, but he couldn't have. There were always at least one or two people by the tree, and most of the time we were all there. I only went away with the group for about three minutes, to get the picnic baskets and beer coolers from the car, and Cindy was yelling up to him in the tree when we got back. She even climbed part way up and tossed him a beer."

"You must have been away from the tree, playing softball or something like that," I insisted.

But she shook her head. "It was more of a beer drinking and talking afternoon. A few of the girls were tossing a ball around, but most of us

were sitting around the tree chatting with Professor Langworth."

I looked up at the tree with something like respect. "And when did you discover he was missing?"

"Late in the day, when we were almost ready to leave. Some of the girls called up to him and he didn't answer. Then we began to get concerned, and a couple of people went up the tree after him."

"Who?"

"Who? Let's see. I think Mr. Drake and Miss Spring, both faculty members."

"I've met Miss Spring. Which one is Drake?"

She glanced around, finally pointing out a sandy-haired athletic type who was busy charming the girls.

"He's sort of taken Mr. Yeaver's place with the girls," she confided. "His first name's Joe."

"And they found nothing when they went up the tree?"

"Nothing. Not a thing. There's no place he could have hidden up there. No hollow limb or anything."

I grunted and opened a can of beer, feeling the cold spray of it on my arm. "What happened then?"

"We looked around a little, but he wasn't anywhere. Professor Langworth insisted he must have wandered off, maybe even had an accident. Finally we called the sheriff's office but they couldn't come, so we got a troop of boy scouts who were camped nearby to search for him. They searched the whole park. He was nowhere. He'd

just vanished at the top of that tree, gone up in the sky like those Indians and their rope trick."

"What about his car?" I asked. "Was it missing?"

"He hadn't driven that day. He came with Miss Spring. They were engaged."

I WANDERED over to the group of girls clustered around Joe Drake, but he was in no mood to be interrupted. Instead I sought out Susan Doud's girl friend, Cindy McGee. She was a large girl, a bit too athletic for my tastes, but with a nice shape and pale, innocent eyes that seemed to look into your soul.

"I enjoyed your lecture," she said.

"Thank you."

"George Gordon. That was Lord Byron's name."

"Was it?"

"Oh, you know that it was! You're making fun of me!"

"Not really," I said. "Your friend Susan was just telling me about the man who climbed to the top of that tree and disappeared."

"Yes. Did you ever hear of anything so weird?"

"Sounds like a college prank to me."

"Believe me, it wasn't! I was right there by the tree all of the time, and he never came down."

"Do you think he's dead?"

She shrugged her broad shoulders. "I suppose he must be, now. Nobody ever found a trace of him."

I stared up at the sky. "In a tomb of some sort at the top of that tree?"

But before she could answer we were joined by Joe Drake, who slipped an arm about her waist as easily as if he'd been doing it forever. I was beginning to wonder about the exact nature of student-faculty relations at Larabee College.

"I've been wanting to chat with you about your lecture, Mr. Gordon," he said.

"Good. I hope you had no great disagreements with it."

"None whatever. In fact, I was about to compliment you on it."

"I need another beer," Cindy told us, twisting free of his encircling arm. "I'll be back!"

Joe Drake lit a cigarette and watched her departing rear with a calculating male eye. "Nice gal."

I sipped my own beer and said nothing.

"I hear you've been asking questions about Glen Yeaver."

"A few. Professor Langworth thought I might get a book out of it. I wrote a couple of mystery novels some years ago."

Drake smiled. "I don't really think he wanted to make a detective out of you. Why stir up old mysteries?"

"Why indeed?" I glanced again at the great towering oak. "I think I'll go for a little climb. Care to join me?"

"You're going up in the tree?" Drake asked, momentarily taken aback.

"Sure. I might find that better world that Yeaver went to."

I grabbed hold of the lowest branches and pulled myself up. It was not a hard tree to climb, but I could see that it would be difficult for most girls. There were a few long stretches between limbs. But Joe Drake was coming up right behind me, not even winded by the effort.

When we'd gone about halfway up, I paused in a forking crotch and leaned against the solid bark. I was aware of the girls on the ground, watching our progress.

"Do you ever give your classes any of Nabokov's poetry to read?" I asked Drake.

"I teach Nineteenth Century English Lit," he explained. "Though I won't swear they don't sneak a look at *Lolita* occasionally. It's more interesting than Jane Austen these days."

I was watching a large black ant move along the bark near my face. "Nabokov wrote a poem once, called *The Ballad of Longwood Glen*. It was about a man who went to a park with his wife and children, and climbed to the top of a tree and disappeared."

"Oh?"

"It was an oak, like this one."

"What happened in the poem?"

"They cut down the tree but they never found him. His wife remarried."

Joe Drake was silent for a time. Then he said, "Don't you think we'd better start down?"

"Before we disappear, too?" I asked him.

The English instructor sighed. "Don't ask too many questions, Mr. Gordon. It won't get you anywhere."

"There's only one question I need to ask," I told him.

"How did he vanish from the tree?"

I shook my head. "No. Why did he vanish from the tree?"

I rode back to the campus with Judith Spring, listening to the rustle of dead leaves beneath the wheels. The day had turned suddenly cool, reminding us that October can be a fickle beauty.

"You'll be leaving tomorrow?" she asked me.

I nodded. "I'm catching the noon train."

"Have you enjoyed your stay?"

"It's been interesting."

"I saw you up in the tree with Joe Drake this afternoon."

"I like oaks. They keep their leaves longer than other varieties."

"Some do. It depends on their location. In the city sometimes you'll notice a tree right next to a street-light will stay green a bit longer."

"You were engaged to him," I said suddenly.

"Yes," she answered after a moment.

"You didn't tell me."

"You didn't ask."

"He never contacted you after he disappeared?"

"No."

The afternoon had passed quickly

into evening, and by the time they reached the campus it was almost dark.

"Did he take his car? His clothes?" I asked.

"No. Nothing. He just—disappeared."

"Do you think he's still alive?"

"I've never known what to think."

I left her at the quadrangle and headed back toward the little room they'd given me in the faculty quarters. But on the way I had a thought and detoured to Professor Langworth's office in the English Department, where a light was burning.

He glanced up as I knocked and entered. "Hello. Did you enjoy our little picnic?"

"Very much, sir. But I was talking to a few people about Glen Yeaver's disappearance, and I had a question."

"Ha! I knew you'd get a plot idea out of it." He seemed really pleased by it. "What's your question?"

"Why couldn't the sheriff come?"

"What?"

"Somebody told me the sheriff was called after the disappearance but he couldn't come. Why not?"

"Well—let me think now. I guess that was the day they were after that wounded bank robber over in Grovedale. They had roadblocks up all over the county."

I nodded. "Did they see any evidence of Yeaver at the roadblocks?"

"Not a thing."

"Tell me about the robbery."

"There's nothing much to tell. A masked man held up the Grovedale Trust Company and got away with \$20,000. The bank manager fired a shot at his car and wounded him. The car was stolen and when they found it later there was blood all over the front seat. But they never found the robber or the money."

"No," I said quietly. "They wouldn't have."

"The sheriff said it was like he'd just flown away."

I nodded. "Or climbed a tree."

I DIDN'T HAVE to go looking for her, because she was sitting in my room waiting. Legs crossed, still wearing the blue slacks and fuzzy top I remembered from the afternoon.

"I'm Cindy McGee, Susan's friend," she said. "I met you this afternoon."

"I remember. What can I do for you, Cindy?"

"You were asking about Glen Yeaver."

"Yes."

"Did someone hire you to come here, to ask about him?"

"You sneaked into my room to ask me that? I give lectures; I don't solve mysteries."

"Then why all the questions?"

"Just say I was curious."

She nodded. A young girl, so very, very young, for all her broad shoulders and pale eyes. "And have you found out what happened to him?"



"Yes."

"Oh?" Her lower lip was beginning to tremble, just a bit.

"There's only one thing I don't know. What did you do with the body, Cindy?"

"The body?"

"Glen Yeaver's body."

"My God! You think I killed him!"

"No, I don't. He was killed by a bullet from a gun fired by the manager of the Grovedale Trust Company."

She was on her feet now, pale and

trembling. "Where'd you get that crazy idea?"

I sighed and took hold of her shoulders. They were thin beneath the fuzzy sweater. "Cindy, I wasn't here a year ago. I just came yesterday. To the people here, there was no connection between an English instructor climbing a tree and a bandit robbing a bank in another town across the county. But to me, a stranger, the disappearance of the English instructor and the bank bandit at almost the same hour was too much of a coincidence."

"You couldn't know," she sobbed. "You couldn't!"

"But I could. I just listened to what people had to say for two days. Someone mentioned that at first there was a suspicion Yeaver had embezzled some money from the college. Why would anyone think that, unless he was known to be in debt, to need cash? And someone else said that Yeaver had been popular with the girl students, and then that Joe Drake had taken his place with the girl students. I saw Drake with his arm around you. It was an easy assumption that you were one with whom Drake had replaced Yeaver."

"You assume a lot."

"He was engaged to Miss Spring, but still friendly with you. He could only have left that tree at one time—in the three minutes or so when Susan and the others were unloading the cars. You were alone by the tree then. When they re-

turned, you were yelling up to him, but nobody said he answered you. He was already gone, through the woods to the place where he'd hidden the stolen car."

"Somebody would have seen him."

"But nobody did. There'd have been no harm done if he had been seen. Not at that time. He was hoping to rob the bank and get back to the park, back to his tree, before he was missed. If he couldn't get back up the tree, he could just appear and say he'd been walking. Unfortunately, the girls camped right around the bottom of it. And when Yeaver didn't come back, they had a real mystery on their hands. You could hardly admit at that point that you'd lied about him being still up there."

"All right," she said. "He did leave the tree, as you say. But I never saw him again after that."

I shook my head. I was no detective, but some things were fairly obvious. "There was a lot of blood in his abandoned car. He had to go somewhere for help. Am I to believe he had another girl he could have gone to? That he would have brought two people in on his scheme?"

"He could have gone to Judith Spring. They were engaged."

"Since we know Yeaver was badly wounded, and since he never reappeared, we must assume that he died of his wound. That means the person he sought shelter with had to dispose of the body. You're a bigger

girl, better able to struggle with a couple hundred pounds of dead weight."

"Why wouldn't I have simply called the police? He came to me and died. I was in the clear."

"Two reasons: first, since the meeting obviously couldn't have taken place in the students' dorm, you must have arranged to meet him at a motel or an apartment somewhere. That implicated you pretty deeply. And second, there was the matter of some twenty thousand dollars. If you called the police, you would have had to give it up, of course."

She flew at me then, clawing for my eyes, but I grabbed her wrists and managed to hold her off. She was a strong girl, and she fought like a man.

"Why did you have to come here?" she screamed. "Why did you have to know it all?"

"I don't care about you," I told her. "Yeaver's dead and gone, and no concern of mine. It might relieve your conscience a bit, though, if you sent back the money. Whatever you haven't spent."

She collapsed onto the couch and began to cry. After a time I asked, "Where did you hide the body?"

"In the park," she said between sobs. "He lived for a day in the apartment, and after he died I took

him in the trunk of my car and buried him in the park. Near the tree. The leaves were starting to fall then, and they covered the fresh earth. This spring I went back and planted grass seed."

"Yes," I said, almost to myself. "Near the tree."

Judith Spring drove me to the train station the following morning, to catch the 12:05 back to New York. She was quieter than she had been at our first meeting, and something obviously seemed to be troubling her.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"You were asking questions about Glen Yeaver," she said.

"A few. I was just curious, and I wondered what you and the others might have thought happened to him."

"Did you find out what happened to him?"

I stared hard at the lines of her face before replying. "No. No, I didn't. I guess he just climbed that tree to his tomb and died there. Blew away, like a dead leaf in autumn."

We had paused on the platform, and the train was coming into view, far down the tracks.

"I've always had a feeling he was still there," she said. "Still there by that damned tree."

"I'm sure he is," I told her, and boarded the train for home.

The ONLY MAGAZINE featuring MIKE SHAYNE every month.

A Matter of Living

He was an untidy, mean little man.

But now he was an untidy little

corpse—and I must find his killer.

by JEFFREY M. WALLMAN

I DISLIKED THE rooming house on sight. It was one of those converted Victorian mansions, subdivided to hold pensioners, drafts, cobwebs, and memories.

I turned the little handle that rang the doorbell, and the manager, Mr. Corberly, answered. He introduced me to Mrs. Arkham, who was the one who'd called us.

Mrs. Arkham was incredibly old. Her white hair had rubbed off; her joints were loose and she was very shabby.

"Mrs. Arkham thinks something happened to Mr. Bloomquist in Apartment Two, Officer," Corberly peered at me through scratched spectacles.

"Know it," Mrs. Arkham said glumly. "Live right next door to him.

Heard him cry out and fall down, I did."

"Neither of you went up and checked for yourselves?"

"No need to," Mrs. Arkham said.

"Why's that, Ma'am?"

"Bloomquist's dead."

"How can you be sure?"

Mrs. Arkham studied me with the patience of wisdom instructing foolish youth. "By the time you reach my age, officer, you'll have heard and seen enough of your friends pass away to know how it sounds."

She put a gnarled grip on the ornate bannister and started climbing. "I'll make the same sound when I die."

We trailed after her, eventually reaching the third floor. Mr. Corberly



licked his withered lips and removed a key from his belt, and after jiggling the latch on Apartment Two, opened the door. I stepped past him and into the small apartment, which looked like it had been the upstairs pantry originally.

A slate sink and buckled counters

ran under leaded windows, late May afternoon lighting the dust like flashlight beams in a closet. In the room's center stood a worn wooden kitchen table, a spot where Bloomquist apparently spent most of his time. A percolator was plugged into the combination light and socket fixture

overhead, and gurgled with a heavy smelling brew. Beside it was an opened carton of milk, a sugar bowl, and an overturned spoon sitting in its own puddle. A straight-backed chair faced an empty coffee cup and a deck of dog-eared cards.

Another chair had fallen over on its back. Mr. Bloomquist was still in it, half crumpled, half sitting, wrapped in an old flannel bathrobe. His spindly bare legs had skewed awkwardly, and one hand still clutched his stiffened throat.

I crossed to him, sugar and coffee granules scratching underneath my shoes, and knelt down beside the pool of coffee that had spilled from the dangling cup in his other fingers. The look on his face explained why Mrs. Arkham had heard him cry out.

I checked his pulse automatically, but there was no question that he was dead. Then I asked Mr. Corberly to step over and make the identification. He took the required look, shuddered and backed away.

"Yes, yes, that's him," he grimaced. "Mr. Bloomquist, all right."

Mrs. Arkham still stood in the doorway.

"Not surprised," she said flatly.

"Why do you say that, Ma'am?"

She gazed at me. "Only way any of us leave here is dead."

Her pessimism was depressing. "I have to call headquarters."

Mrs. Arkham shook her head. "Only phone in the building is his," she said, indicating Corberly.

"You can use it, Officer. I

wouldn't have one, either, except that I'm the manager and the owners pay for it."

Corberly's apartment was in the right hand front of the house, and larger and brighter than Bloomquist's.

"Best one," he said "It used to be the dining room."

Now it was cluttered with relics of the past, oval portraits of people long since horizontal and lumpy furniture popular when I was a child.

I reported the death to Harrison, who was on switchboard duty at headquarters. He said he'd send the ambulance and dispatch a car immediately. I hung up and turned back to the landlord and flipped open my pad.

"Mr. Corberly, I'd like to ask a few questions."

"Well, go ahead, but I can't be of much help. Mrs. Arkham would be the one to ask. After all it was she who heard Mr. Bloomquist."

"Then you didn't see Mr. Bloomquist at all today?"

"Not for a couple of days, I'd say. I tend to my little garden and that's about all." Corberly shuffled over to the large front windows to where a tier of shelves overflowed with plants. He smiled at me, obviously proud of this.

"I have all sorts of flowers and herbs here," he said. "Some of them quite rare."

"That's fine, sir. Is there anything you can tell me concerning Mr. Bloomquist's death?"



"Not really." Corberly frowned, puckering his furrowed brow, then hesitated before speaking again. "I mean, I'd hate to say anything wrong, officer, but—"

"Let me judge whether it's wrong or not, sir."

"Perhaps you should talk to Mr. Leopold."

"Leopold?"

"Edwin Leopold. He lives across the hall in Apartment One. He might have been the last person to see Mr. Bloomquist alive."

"What makes you think that?"

"He and Mr. Bloomquist often played cards in the morning, and I'm

pretty sure they did today. At least there was an awful lot of noise upstairs, and I thought I recognized their voices in one of their usual arguments. This building carries sound well, you see."

"Usual arguments?"

"Been going on for years. Every time they play it seems one accuses the other of cheating or something, and they start fighting. You'd think they'd have outgrown it long ago, but maybe it gave them something to do."

"Is Mr. Leopold in now?"

"I don't think so. I was watering my plants when I heard him come downstairs, slam his door, and then a few minutes later slam the front door. I saw him hurry down the walk, probably to go shopping. Generally does right after a row of theirs."

"Anything else you can add?"

He thought for a moment. "No."

I shut the book and thanked him. At the door, he stopped me. "Ah, officer, please don't let Mr. Leopold know I said anything. I'm sure he'll feel bad enough if he thinks he might have helped cause Mr. Bloomquist's death."

"Caused his death?"

"The argument. Brought on the heart attack."

"We don't know if it was a stroke, Mr. Corberly."

I crossed the hall and knocked, but Mr. Leopold wasn't in. At least he didn't answer the door.

Ed McDonald and Rodin arrived

then. I briefed them on the way up to Bloomquist's apartment. They looked at the body.

"Heart attack, I bet," said Rodin. "Must have been sitting here, drinking coffee, and then keeled over."

"Sometimes those things are real sudden, all right," Ed sighed. Then, turning to me, he said, "Touch anything, Al?"

"Possibly the door jamb when I entered. That's all."

"Good. You can go now, if you want." He smiled at me. "I'll keep you posted if anything happens."

"Thanks, Ed, but it's my case."

"Suit yourself. It's just that we want you to take it easy until you retire."

"Next year I retire. Not now. Besides, I want to ask that Leopold a few questions still."

"Leopold?" Rodin asked. "The guy the landlord said was playing cards with Bloomquist?"

"Fighting was more like it," I answered. "Must have left minutes before Bloomquist died. I mean, there's Leopold's cup, right by the deck of cards. Bloomquist hadn't even gotten around to washing it yet."

McDonald surveyed a sink of dirty dishes. "If he ever did."

"Washed himself, at least," Rodin said. He stood by the bathroom door he'd opened, a small cloud of steam escaping around him. "Full tub of water in here. Probably was getting ready to take a bath."

I shrugged. "Explains why he's

wearing nothing but a bathrobe." I started for the bedroom. "Maybe there's something in his clothes."

We found his clothes draped over a chair. We rifled them and found only the usual set of keys and lint you'd expect. The wallet was thin, worn, and resewn, and contained a few small bills, an identification card with this address on it and a next of kin in Omaha, and his social security card. Three plastic picture holders had frosted over, but they only held a couple of photos so old it was hard to make what they were and a business card.

The card was new, imprinted with "Roman & Saxe Realtors" across the middle in red lettering, and below the name of George Saxe, Jr., and the firm's address.

I turned it over automatically. Ballpenned on the card was a note reading, "Please contact me at once. G. Saxe." I handed the card to McDonald to see what he could make of it.

"Behind in his rent, no doubt," McDonald said, and he put the card back in the wallet. He shook his head. "Lousy way to live."

The rest of Bloomquist's bedroom was as Spartan as his personal effects. A bedside clock ratcheted from a noise motor. His bureau and nightstand contained nothing of value; no mail, no pictures—just coffee stains. A TV Guide was open to last night's listings on the scarred TV, and I envisioned his wrinkled body stretched out on the unmade bed,

watching and sipping. Mr. Bloomquist had been very much alone, indeed.

We walked out of the bedroom and were about to check the kitchen when Doctor Crutcher arrived. Les Crutcher was older than I, but luckily in a profession that didn't require retirement. On top of that, he could be cranky, and usually was, which would have had me sacked in no time. He nodded to us and went straight to Bloomquist. After a moment he straightened up.

"Call for the lab," he grimaced. "The man has been poisoned."

The change from accidental or natural death to murder is a violent one. "Are you sure?" Rodin asked.

"So, you want an autopsy on the spot, maybe? You don't trust my judgment? Sure I'm sure."

Rodin didn't wait to hear more but turned on his heel and hurried downstairs to radio Homicide.

"What kind of poison, Doctor?"

"Well, I can't be positive," he hedged, "But it looks like arsenic." He bent down again and dipped a finger into the puddle of coffee, sniffed the sample, then touched his tongue to it. "Bitter," he scowled.

I leaned over and tapped the spigot on the coffee pot and gingerly licked a couple of drops.

"Not the coffee," I said, checking the sugar bowl next. This time the taste was unmistakable, a sort of vinegar and alum combination that made me pucker involuntarily. "The sugar's full of it."

Ed and I continued looking through the kitchen. Under the sink Ed found an old tin container like cocoa used to be sold in, only this one had a skull and crossbones on its face, and a faded red warning: *Danger! Poison!* He pried the lid off and inside was a white granulated crystal.

"Just like sugar," he said.

"Bloomquist was murdered," I said, gritting my teeth.

"Somebody loaded the old man's sugar bowl with that stuff, and he used some in his coffee, drank it, and died." I handed the tin to the doctor.

Crutcher studied the label. "He might have used this poison as sugar," he said gravely. "But if so, he wasn't murdered."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Says here this is sodium arsenite," he answered, tapping the label.

"So? You said he looked like he might have died from arsenic, and lots of people have been killed with that stuff."

"This is arsenite, not arsenic, which is different, being a derivative of arsenous acid. It's incredibly deadly, but even worse tasting. You know yourself how bitter it was when you sampled the sugar?"

Ed frowned. "You mean that there's nothing that could have hidden the taste of the arsenite? Bloomquist would have known immediately that something was wrong with his coffee?"

"Exactly," Crutcher said. "He would have spit out the first little sip

and thrown the rest down the drain. That's why arsinite was never used as a successful rat poison, where regular arsenic does very well."

"So Bloomquist killed himself, then," Ed said.

"Suicide?" I couldn't believe it. "You mean that Bloomquist committed suicide?"

"It's the only answer, if the doc is right," Ed said.

"And I am," Crutcher added. "What the police decide to call this death is your business, not mine, but let me warn you that should you press murder charges on anyone, I'd have to testify that the only way Bloomquist could have swallowed that cup of coffee was deliberately."

"But suicides don't draw their bath water and then calmly sit down and drink poison," I argued.

"Oh, for—the matter seems closed, Al," Ed said.

"Closed, hell!" I was fuming. "I know he didn't commit suicide, Ed. I just know it."

"Al, the courts do not accept the intuition of an old cop as evidence these days."

I was about to tell him about the difference between intuition and the years of experience that made me an old cop when Rodin reappeared.

"Your Leopold has arrived," he said, thumbing the hall. "You'd better get there soon, or he won't be in any shape to talk."

"Is he hurt?"

"No, but he was carrying two grocery sacks of wine."

"You don't have to talk to him, Al," Ed added. "The case is closed, and I'm going to file a report labelling Bloomquist as a suicide."

"Suicide?" Rodin looked puzzled.

"You fill him in, Ed, while I see Mr. Leopold." I stomped out of the apartment in a huff.

Mr. Leopold yelled a gruff, "Come in." I did. He sat in an overstuffed velvet easy chair, sipping a glass of wine and watching some old movie on the television. A glass gallon bottle was beside his foot; a burgundy, with the crayon price still on the off-label; \$1.49. He was fat and squat and had mottled skin and looked like the tuba player in a German polka band.

I introduced myself, and told him that I would like to ask him about Mr. Bloomquist upstairs. I didn't add he was dead.

Leopold nodded and drank some wine. "Play gin with him, but I swear never again."

"Why not, Mr. Leopold?"

"He cheats, that's why."

"You were with him this morning?"

"Until I caught him peeking at the bottom card of the deck. And then he had the nerve to accuse me of rigging the shuffle."

"You had a fight, I gather."

"Who told you? Mrs. Arkham? That nosy old woman should stop chasing Bloomquist and realize she's too old. No, I bet it was Parker. Or that toad of a landlord, Corberly."

"Doesn't matter, sir."

"You're right, it doesn't. Yeah, we had a few words. Told him off proper."

"What time did you leave him?"

"About noon. I turned on the midday news when I got back here."

"How was Mr. Bloomquist when you left him?"

"Mad."

"But healthy?"

"Very, the way he was hopping and swearing."

"You came back here and left again."

"That's right. After the news was over, I walked down to the corner and bought some supplies at the grocery."

"Been gone a long time for just that."

"Some friends I know were there. Often are. I talked with them a while, since there's nothing else to do." Leopold slowly placed his glass on the chair arm and leaned forward. "Why all the questions, officer? Something about Bloomquist?"

"He's dead."

Leopold knocked the glass off the arm. The dusty carpet soaked up the wine like a blotter. "No!"

"He died shortly after you left, evidently."

"Stroke? He seemed to have a good ticker."

"Probably did, Mr. Leopold." I took a breath, intent on catching his reaction. "But he died of poison."

Leopold's eyes grew very large and round, and he opened his mouth in a gasp. "H—how?"

"Poison," I repeated. "Sodium arsenite in his sugar bowl."

He started to rise but sank back. "I left him and now he's—he's dead. Who's there to play gin with?"

I waited until some of the daze left his eyes. Then I asked, "Did you drink any coffee while you were with him this morning?"

"Yes. I don't care much for coffee, though." He reached down shakily and retrieved the fallen glass and poured a refresher. "Thank God I take it black."

"Did Bloomquist have any coffee?"

"Of course. He drank it by the gallon. Always had a pot going. I remember him having two, three cups this morning."

"Strange, don't you think, Mr. Leopold?"

"Strange? How?"

"He used plenty of the sugar while you were with him. Then you two fight, you leave, and his next cup kills him. I think that's very peculiar."

"Hold on," Leopold exploded. "Are you accusing me of murder?"

"Not at all. I'm merely remarking how odd it is."

Leopold struggled to his feet. "I may not have loved the man, but I would never have killed him."

"Did Bloomquist ever mention suicide to you?"

"Never. Not Bloomquist. He's not the type. Is that what you think?"

"We don't know yet, Mr. Leopold." The others already had

closed their minds, but mine was still open. "Tell me, what kind of man was he, Mr. Leopold?"

"Like most old people, I suppose," he sighed. "Like the song says, officer. We're tired of living, but scared of dying."

I thanked Leopold and left him to his wine, there being little else to ask him. I walked back up the stairs to Mrs. Arkham, who was standing in the doorway of her apartment, conversing with McDonald. I couldn't see her vamping poor Mr. Bloomquist, no matter what Leopold had said. She repeated her story about hearing him cry out and then calling us.

"Did you hear anything else after that?"

"His scream. That woke me up. I was taking a little nap and it startled me."

"Then you couldn't swear that he was alone until then?"

"Why the questions, Al?" Ed looked at me questioningly.

"I still think it's peculiar Bloomquist would use his sugar bowl and not spoon the poison directly from the can."

"Maybe he thought it would look nicer this way," Ed said in exasperation. "Suicides often do crazy things under the stress, but it's a minor point that doesn't matter."

The lab crew had arrived while I had been with Leopold, and they were finishing up when we returned to Bloomquist's apartment. Pictures had been taken and the body re-

moved, and Crutcher had gone. The disposition of the case made the investigation relatively routine, so it wasn't too much later that we all left together. Rodin switched off the lights and made sure the door was locked.

"Face facts, Al," he said on the stairs. I didn't reply.

At the precinct house, Rodin and McDonald insisted on turning in the reports.

"I can handle them," I said. "I happen to have a few years of typing under my belt, too, you know." I was being stubborn, I was told, and since my shift was over and they knew how much I liked going home on time and . . .

I went home thoroughly miffed. I snapped at my wife, Sue, and generally carried on after dinner until she couldn't take it any longer and went up to bed early. I sat in the living room, still annoyed at McDonald and the others until the late TV news was over. The idea that men my age are fit only for rocking chair duty is hard to overcome, especially when it's meant with good intention.

Bloomquist's death also bothered me. In fact, it was more frustrating than the other problem. I tossed and turned in bed for some time before sleeping. In a forgotten fold of my mind was some detail that nagged at me, that tried to get out like a bone stuck in a throat, and wouldn't come.

The next morning I coughed up that little detail.

When I got to the precinct at eight, I immediately put in a call to Doctor Crutcher, but his answering service said he wouldn't be available until eleven.

Then I asked Captain Baker for a couple of hours off, and he was glad to humor me. Using my own car, I drove across town to the offices of Roman and Saxe and found George Saxe, Jr., in.

"Terrible. Mr. Bloomquist, dead!" George Saxe, Jr., sat up in his leather chair, then settled himself again. "But that's the history of those places."

"We suspect suicide."

"Strange. He seemed in such excellent spirits. Do you know why? I mean did he leave a note?"

"No, but you did."

"Me?"

"On the back of a business card we found in his wallet. You did request he contact you, didn't you?"

"Ah, yes, I did. I drove over to see him day before yesterday, but he was out. I left my card for him in his mailbox."

"Did he get hold of you?"

"He tried. I was at lunch when he phoned yesterday. My secretary left a message that he was going to call again. I never heard from him, though." He started shuffling the papers on his desk. "I'm sorry, I can't locate her memo now."

"It's all right," I said.

"You think he might have committed suicide over that?"

I shrugged. "Non payment of

rent. Eviction notice. A warning over being too loud. Little things have been enough to set them off."

"None of those troubles with Mr. Bloomquist. In fact I wanted to see him about becoming the new manager there."

"Coberly leaving?"

"No, not that I know of." Saxe shifted in his seat again, frowning. "Mr. Corberly has done a fine job for a long time, but in the past few years he seems to have gotten surly and hard to deal with, neglecting his chores."

"You told him he was going to be replaced?"

"No, although I've warned him before." Saxe cleared his throat. "Mr. Bloomquist seemed so spry for his age. That's why his death is a shock to me."

"I think you're not the only one it shocked." I thanked Mr. Saxe, Jr., and left.

Back at the station, I found that Doc Crutcher had returned my call minutes before, so I had no trouble when I phoned him again. I told him what I suspected. "I think Bloomquist was murdered, but I need your help to prove it."

"I'm no expert in forensic medicine," he hedged.

"You have books on the subject, don't you?"

"Half a dozen, but—"

"Fine," I said. "You start digging through them. I'll be over right away."

"Listen, I've got more important

things to do than galavant through tunket just because you have a dander up over my diagnosis."

"You're just afraid you're wrong and are going to have to admit it," I said. "Besides, I might show that age doesn't equal senility, Crutcher, although in your case, I'm not so sure."

He was still grumbling when I arrived, but had found what I had hoped for. We got back into my car, his thumb on the index of an old medicine book. When we arrived, I took a moment to check the line of mail boxes on the front porch. Bloomquist's was on the second row, close to the outer edge. I turned around and saw Mr. Corberly in the window watering his plants. He looked up and nodded recognition and in a couple of moments he had opened the front door.

"Sorry to bother you, Mr. Corberly," I said. "But there were a couple of points that needed clarification. Do you mind if we come in?"

"No, no." He held the door of his apartment for us.

"You told me yesterday that you hadn't seen Mr. Bloomquist in a couple of days."

"I didn't."

"George Saxe said that Mr. Bloomquist phoned him yesterday. You have the only telephone in the building."

"I think he went out. Down to the corner grocery."

"Strange. He gave this number as where Mr. Saxe could call him back."

"No, he said he'd call them back—"

"He did use the phone, then."

The landlord glared at me. "All right. Bloomquist did stop in."

"Why did you lie?"

"Didn't want to get involved," he said huskily.

"Did he stay for long? Say for a cup of coffee?"

"Does it matter?"

"We were hoping for a clue to his apparent suicide, and we thought perhaps he might have said something to you."

"Nothing. Not a word."

"He did stay for coffee then?"

Corberly didn't answer.

"*Gymnema Sylvestra*," the doctor said suddenly. We both turned to where he was inspecting one of the many herbs Corberly was growing. "I think this is the one. See the symetalous flowers arranged in umbrels? Just like the illustration you see."

"It's just another plant," cried Corberly, trying to grab it.

"Your book backs up what I remember, doesn't it, Doc?"

"Yes. Says it's a common type of southern milkweed often used in folk medicine to numb the sense of taste."

"What—what are you talking about? Mr. Bloomquist was fine when he left here. He died upstairs, alone."

"Yes, but it wasn't suicide. You murdered him."

"Somebody else . . ."

"Only you, Corberly," I said. "You — old enough to remember what this herb can do, and familiar enough with Bloomquist's love for coffee to be sure he'd have another cup when he went upstairs."

"I still don't understand," said the doctor. "The arsinite poison is foully bitter."

"The *Gymnema Sylvestra*, that's how. Corberly brewed Bloomquist a cup of coffee with some of the plant's leaves in it. Bloomquist's sense of taste was gone when he left here. Bloomquist would never realize what he was drinking when he spooned the arsinite into his next cup upstairs. It would look like suicide and it almost worked."

"You can't prove it," Corberly said huskily.

"I've the plant for a starter. I'll bet that your garbage sack has the dregs from the leaves you used. And I have your motive. Why don't you tell us about it? Get it off your chest."

"Damn you!" Corberly was almost in tears. "How the devil did you know?"

"You forgot that there are others still around old enough to recall the same back country trick. I grew up in Louisiana, and when I was a child and sick, my mother used to make a tea of the same milkweed and make me drink it so I wouldn't taste the bad medicine that followed. I couldn't remember what the plant was called or looked like, so I had the doctor check his books."

"I thought Leopold was in a fight with Bloomquist," Crutcher said.

"He was, but Leopold was out and didn't return until sometime after Bloomquist made his call from here."

"But why would Corberly kill Bloomquist?"

"Bloomquist was going to take your job, wasn't he?" I said, facing Corberly. "You saw Saxe leave his card in Bloomquist's mail box, and even though you couldn't get to it, you were pretty certain what Saxe wanted."

"All right." Corberly staggered to a chair and slumped, hands on his face. "All right. I was afraid of losing my position. Saxe had warned me, and when Bloomquist came down and called him, I knew what was going to happen. I had to act right then, before he took my job. I did as you said. I mixed the leaves in the coffee, and then left him here for a minute while I ran quickly upstairs with the poison and filled his sugar bowl."

The old manager looked up at us, his withered features contorted. "I had to. They were going to take away everything I had. My whole world, gone. I had to protect myself, don't you see?"

I studied him as I dialed headquarters. I thought of Mrs. Arkham and of Mr. Leopold, and yes, even of myself wanting to hang on to meaning in our lives.

"Yes," I said gently. "I'm afraid I do."

They were the hunted ones, the wounded old she cat . . . the sick old man inside. Both of them knew—one of them must die . . .

COMPANY FOR DEATH

by C. B. GILFORD

DADE BANNOCK was afraid, probably for the first time in his life. Because for the first time in his life, after forty years of being physically stronger than everybody around him, he was now helpless as a baby.

Just one bone had broken, one bone beneath those thick calf muscles in his right leg, but one was enough. He could do nothing but lie here in his bunk. Any attempt to put weight on that leg brought instant, jabbing, excruciating pain. Enough pain to make him faint in three steps.

Of course he might crawl nine miles to the nearest road. The last alternative was to wait, bide his time. Within four or five days, surely, old Ned Travers would begin to worry about the Bannocks and come looking.

Bannock turned on his pillow and looked at Vivian. She'd begun

preparations for dinner. She hated it, he knew, hated everything she had to do in this cabin, but after fifteen years of marriage to an outdoorsy husband, she could perform her chores automatically.

Very deftly now she added chips to the fire, keeping it at just the correct height under the sizzling venison steak.

He considered her coldly, entirely without affection. Vivian was exactly the same age as himself, forty. But her hair had grayed, and she had given up trying to hide the fact. The flesh of her face and neck had begun to wrinkle and sag ever so slightly. She'd always been short, but in the old days she'd been tiny, petite, with a good figure. Now she'd broadened, as her old corduroy slacks revealed.

But he couldn't afford to betray his contempt. For the next four or five days, till Ned Travers decided to



investigate the situation out at the cabin, Vivian was in charge. Vivian was the stronger.

Besides, there was that feeling, that fear, growing in him that somehow she knew about Naomi Peterson. And that she knew too that now was her only chance, the only

chance she could ever conveniently have—of doing what?

Cursing his own helplessness, he tried to shift his weight a little. The movement sent a new wave of pain through his leg, and he was forced to give it up. Already the leg was swollen. He was sure of that.

Would gangrene set in? Was that what she wanted? To make him suffer? Maybe to make him lose the leg? Or even to die?

Her excuses had been preposterous. Only nine miles to the road. And their car was parked there, waiting for them. Of course she didn't know how to drive, but she could try. It was only thirty miles from where the car was parked to Ned Travers' general store. She could walk that too if she wrecked the car. Or she could get from here to Ned Travers' in only two days, just by walking.

But she'd said no. This was the best way. He couldn't survive in this cabin alone for even two days. The fire would go out, and the temperature was below freezing. No, she'd stay here and take care of him. Ned Travers would come. All he had to do was to lie still, lie perfectly still, for four or five days.

Damn! She did know about Naomi.

He lay back, sweating under the three blankets. She had him. Had him right where she wanted him. Accidents, bad luck happens to the best of men. He closed his eyes, smelling the venison steak, and grimly remembered the bad luck . . .

HE'D GOTTEN the idea of the hunting trip when Ned Travers wrote him about the puma.

"She's an old one," Ned had written, "and she's a big one. She'd make a fine rug."

Travers, of course, had been interested mainly in renting him his cabin. Bannock hadn't been up there for almost a year. He'd found another interest. Naomi Peterson had been hired as a temporary typist. But when the need for her services in the office had ended, Bannock had been too wise to keep her on. Instead he'd made her a private little proposition. It involved paying her rent and other bills. Naomi hadn't minded at all.

She was twenty-one and smart. She wanted to marry him if he could ever get rid of his wife. She accepted the apartment and Dade's companionship as a deliberate strategy. Once he got used to her, it'd be hard to give her up.

And it was. When Ned Travers wrote about the puma, the first thing Bannock had thought of was bringing Naomi out here to the cabin. Two things prevented it. The difficulty of doing it without Vivian's finding out, and the fact that Naomi didn't want to come.

But meanwhile there was the choice between the puma and Naomi. Dark Naomi's seething, pulsing beauty, and the tawny old she-lion.

"She may not stay around long," Ned Travers wrote. "She's old and she might look for other places where there's easier game." The passion mounted in him, equal at least to his passion for Naomi. She could wait, though. The cat wouldn't.

So he'd come here to the cabin.

Taking Vivian was the obvious thing to do. She was handy for things like cooking and the other chores.

They'd arrived yesterday, picked up provisions at Ned's store.

"I've got about five days to spare for this," he'd told Travers. "Can't give it any more than that."

Then they'd driven to where the gravel road passed closest to the cabin, and hiked the nine miles in.

The weather was perfect, crisp, clear and cold. There was a light fall of snow on the ground, not enough to impede walking, but just enough to show tracks. On the evening of that first day, he'd spotted the track of the puma. She was headed into higher country. But the tracks were fresh.

They were up before dawn. Vivian went with him as she always had, even though she didn't like to shoot. She came along uncomplainingly and she kept pace with him as they climbed.

The tracks spurred him on. That old cat was walking with small steps. There were several times when she'd lain down to rest right in the cold snow. And she was hungry too. Hungry and on the prowl. Not lying up in her warm comfortable den with a bellyful of deer meat.

They passed horizontally along the face of the mountain, following the clearly defined tracks. To their left, higher up, maybe seventy or eighty yards above them, was a long stone ledge parallel to their present course. A grouping of stunted trees,

almost a thicket, grew out of the inhospitable rock, but even bare of leaves they made a formidable screen.

In the tangle, Dade Bannock saw the flash of tawny color. He acted instinctively. He raised the rifle to his shoulder and fired.

Two sounds, almost simultaneous, broke the wilderness quiet. The crack of the rifle, and above it and lasting longer, the shrill scream of the cat.

She wasn't dead though. Nor was she dying. But she was wounded. The scream was of both pain and rage. And something else too perhaps. Defiance, a challenge.

He didn't know how long the scream lasted, but when it ceased at last, and even the echoes had died away, he found himself shaking. He lowered his rifle slowly, trying to control himself. There was no longer a target, no longer a stirring in the thicket of trees.

"She's dead," Vivian whispered.

"Don't you believe it," he told her. "She's wounded. I don't know how bad, but there was plenty of life in that scream. She's hiding now, waiting for me."

"What are you going to do?"

"Nothing. Do you think I'm going poking around up there and get close enough for her to jump out at me? No, I think I'll just leave her right there. If she's hit bad, she'll die and I'll come back after her tomorrow. If she's still healthy enough to move, I can track her again."

Vivian was suddenly angry. "Are

you going to let the poor thing lie up there and suffer? Can't you go up there and finish her off?"

"And give her a chance to finish me? No siree."

He was tired on that trip back. He kept glancing over his shoulder, foolishly imagining that the wounded puma was stalking him. Of course she wasn't, and he saw nothing. But it was that very nervousness that had caused the accident.

It happened only a hundred yards from the cabin. He should have felt safe by that time at least. But he was careless. What he thought was solid ground was a mere interlacing of twigs and small branches that had accumulated a smooth covering of snow. He stepped on the place, and the little natural bridge collapsed under his weight. Even so, he didn't fall more than three or four feet, but it was enough. He felt, perhaps heard, the snap of bone.

First the sheer amazement, and then the pain. Pain multiplying as Vivian helped him, then dragged him, that hundred yards to the cabin. Getting through the door, shucking off some of his outer garments, then climbing into the bunk, fainting the moment he arrived there.

THE VENISON steak had come to a nice brown. Vivian slapped a piece of it on to a thick platter alongside the fried potatoes and the beans, and brought it over to him.

"How am I supposed to eat that now?" he growled at her.

She was helpful, but not really so. Her suggestion sounded more like a taunt. "Can't you pull yourself up a bit and put the plate on your lap?"

"Are you crazy? My leg hurts like hell if I move an inch."

"All right then, I'll feed it to you."

"Go away," he told her savagely.

She took the plate to the table and began to eat by herself. Through half-closed eyes he watched her. This now was something he was quite certain of. She had never eaten with better appetite.

"Vivian!" A thought had come to him.

"Yes, Dade?"

"People break arms and legs out in the wilderness all the time. They set the bones crudely, rig the best kind of splint they can, and it's better than nothing, even if the doctor has to re-set it later."

"No, Dade. I might only make it worse. Then it would be my fault. Please can't you be patient? All you have to do is to lie there."

He made himself a promise. When this was over, when he was whole and healthy again, he'd get even with her. And more than even.

She made coffee. That he accepted. Somehow he managed to prop himself up on his left elbow so he could sip out of the mug. The coffee was good; it made him feel a little stronger. He looked at her, and found her drinking coffee too, and staring back at him.

"Is Naomi Peterson's coffee

better than mine?" It started without warning, just like that.

He was too surprised for a moment to answer. Then his mind began to work. How should he answer? There seemed no point in denying anything.

"No, her coffee isn't very good," he said finally.

She smiled enigmatically. "Is that why you brought me up here instead of her?" Suddenly she reminded him of the wounded puma. He had to stay clear of her claws too.

"I wanted to talk to you about Naomi," he said.

"Did you?"

"Yes. I figured you knew about her. There's nothing dumb about you, Vivian."

"Why thank you, Dade. But I'm pretty dumb, really. I didn't know for a long time. I'm dumber than that though. I stayed with you even after I knew."

"Why?" he asked hopefully.

"I don't know. Habit, I guess."

Her soft spot! It was easier, more convenient, to keep him than to get rid of him. He leaped, figuratively, to exploit that advantage. "If I ever get out of this, Vivian, I swear to you, I'll break off with Naomi. This is the kind of experience that teaches a man—"

Her voice, cold as the wind outside and twice as sharp, cut cruelly into his passionate plea.

"Don't waste your strength spouting ridiculous lies, Dade," she said.

And she crossed the room and

took the half-emptied coffee mug out of his nerveless grasp. All that remained to him was to beg shamelessly. "But I'm going to try to break off with her, whether you think so or not, Vivian. Help me, Vivian. I'm hurt. Don't let me die."

She turned back to him at that, and she was smiling again.

"I thought so, Dade," she said calmly. "I thought that was bothering you. You're afraid you're going to die. Do you think I'm going to neglect you and let you die? Of starvation? Or of thirst? Or from freezing? I could let this fire go out, couldn't I? And I could rip those blankets off you and throw them into the far corner. And you couldn't brave the pain to crawl after them."

"It would be very simple for me, wouldn't it? I could go off in the woods and camp somewhere and pretend that I got lost out all by myself. Who would doubt my story with you dead?"

Pulling the blankets tightly up around his neck, he cringed before her. "Are you going to kill me, Vivian?"

"I didn't say that I was, only that I could. But if I ever wanted to kill you, this is my chance, isn't it? Once you get back to civilization, you'll leave me for that trollop."

She turned away again, busied herself boiling water over the fire so she could wash the dishes. Later she blew out the lamps, and he heard her undressing and climbing into her own bunk.

But he didn't sleep much that night.

He thought he heard the scream of the wounded puma. But it was far away, and he wasn't sure.

In the morning he drank coffee again, but he still wasn't interested in food. His leg throbbed and ached terribly, and the swelling in it had not subsided. Possibly too he had a fever. But he was alive. He'd survived one day. He was one day closer to Ned Travers' rescue.

He became a little apprehensive when after breakfast Vivian donned her jacket and boots, and took his rifle from where it leaned in the far corner. She didn't, however, make any threatening gestures toward him. She went to the door instead, opened it, went out, and closed the door after her.

A good sign. She'd left a nice fire, and she'd closed the door. So she didn't intend to let him freeze. And she hadn't taken anything besides the rifle. She surely would have taken food if she'd intended to stay away long. But Vivian going hunting?

It was an hour later, or maybe two, that he heard the crack of the rifle. The puma? Had Vivian gone out to try to kill the puma, to put it out of its misery? Why of course. That was more like Vivian. And errand of mercy. And it didn't really matter whether Vivian had killed the beast, or whether it had killed her. One way he'd get a rug, have Ned skin it for him. The other way he'd be rid of Vivian.



But Vivian, somewhat to his disappointment, returned. She looked tired, bedraggled, but at the same time there was a certain satisfaction in the way she replaced the rifle in its corner, shook the snow off herself, and put the coffee pot on to boil.

"I heard you shooting," he said after several minutes. "What were you shooting at?"

"A rabbit."

"A rabbit!"

"Yes, and I hit it too."

"Well, where is it? Didn't you bring it home?"

"Of course not. I left it for the puma."

"What!"

"She's still up there in the thick-et. Starving, like you're afraid of starving, Dade. If I'm going to feed you, I'm going to feed that cat too. A rabbit won't be much, but it'll help. I left the carcass where she could be sure to get it. Upwind of the thicket. She'll smell the fresh blood."

"She won't touch it," Dade Bannock argued. "If you handled the

rabbit, then it has your smell on it. The cat won't touch it."

Vivian's smile spoke her unshakable confidence. "She's too hungry, too hurt, to be so particular."

"But why on earth do you worry so much about that cat?"

"She and I have a lot in common, Dade."

"How's that?"

"We're a couple of old females, past our prime. And we're both wounded. I may not know what to do to help myself, but I'm going to try to help that cat."

Bannock lay back, watching as she moved about, tidying the cabin. But when she finished, she took the rifle again and sat down with it, her back to him. So he could not see what she was doing with the weapon. Disassembling, cleaning, reloading, or merely studying the mechanism?

Then the thought came to him, and he wondered why it had not come earlier. He had already wondered about her new attitude toward hunting, her new-found ability to shoot a living creature. He had told himself that she couldn't just simply shoot him, not unless she wanted to go to prison anyway. But there might be other ways, an accident, an arranged accident. He shivered. Both curiosity and fear goaded him into asking her the question.

"Vivian, what are you doing with my rifle?"

She answered over her shoulder. "Learning how it works. Do you want to show me all the tricks?"

"No, certainly not. Why should I?"

"Because I'm the one who'll have to use it now. I'm the protector of the hearth."

He didn't pursue the subject, but the fear had sharpened in him. Of course, he realized now, she wouldn't try to freeze or starve him. It would be pretty hard to freeze under several blankets in a snug cabin, even without a fire, and she wouldn't dare to take his blankets away from the cabin. A man could stay alive for quite a while without food too.

If she went off for help, she'd be expected to leave food and water within reach. No, those methods were no good. A shooting accident was definite, certain. That was what was in her mind now. She was familiarizing herself with the rifle, trying to devise the best arrangement.

"I'm hungry," he announced in a desperate attempt to divert her attention.

He succeeded. She got up and returned the rifle to its original corner. At the fire, beginning to assemble her collection of pots and pans, she asked him what he was hungry for.

"Some of that steak I didn't eat last night."

Now that he had professed to being hungry, he would have to eat. He began to pull himself up to more of a sitting position. He had to drag the injured leg along. But the mere friction of pulling it between the

sheets, under the weight of the blankets, caused a flare-up of pain. Sweat blossomed on his face again.

But he mustn't let her see how bad the pain was, how incapable of movement he was. He managed to reach the sitting position, rubbed his sleeve across his sweaty face. Yes, This ought to be his approach to her—pretend he wasn't in such bad shape after all.

She seemed a trifle surprised when she turned and found him sitting there, almost straight.

"Do you want me to feed you?" she asked.

"No thanks."

"Shall I cut up the steak for you?"

"I can do it."

Using an old shelf board, she managed something like a bed tray across his lap. Then she brought the plate of steak and beans, cutlery, and a steaming black cup of coffee. Under her watchful eyes, he sliced into the steak, though the weight of the board on his thigh when he did so made him want to scream. To deter the scream he jabbed a hunk of the venison into his mouth and chewed vigorously.

"You act pretty healthy," she said.

She went back to the table to eat, paying him no further attention. He resolved to consume everything on his plate. Perhaps if she were convinced that he was alert and strong, she might pause before attempting murder.

Then an even better idea occurred to him. He needed a weapon of his own, and a rather good one was right here in his hand. The little saw-toothed steak knife. Acting while he had the chance, while she wasn't observing him, he slipped the knife off the plate and secreted it down among the blankets.

Just in time. Vivian was clearing the table. He wolfed down the last several bites of his own food, and was ready with an empty plate, coffee mug, spoon and fork, when she came to get them. He handed the stuff to her and covered the moment with conversation.

"Very nice lunch, Vivian. Do you think that cat's enjoying your rabbit about this time?"

"I hope so."

She took the utensils without commenting on the absence of the knife. He watched her cross the room, kneel before the pan of hot water, and commence to wash up. Still no comment. Probably because her mind was occupied with her own problem.

When she was finished and the dishes were stacked to dry, she put on her jacket, cap, and boots, and took the rifle from its corner.

"I'm going to see if she took that rabbit," she told him.

"Maybe shoot her another one too, huh?"

"If I can."

"Well, good luck."

"Why don't you lie down again?"

"I prefer it this way."

She went out, closing the door behind her. He gripped the side of the bunk, fighting a wave of pain and nausea. To distract himself, he took out the knife and contemplated it.

How would he use it, he wondered, when the time came? That depended on how Vivian was going to try to kill him. There were two ways, he figured. Either she would make it appear that she shot him accidentally, as she laid the gun on the table perhaps, or tripped over something as she was carrying it—or she'd try to make it seem that he'd shot himself. While he was cleaning the gun maybe, for her to use, since she was the hunter.

The second would be preferable from Vivian's point of view, wouldn't it? All she'd have to do would be to arrange for powder burns to fool the local sheriff, who probably wouldn't bother to call anybody else in to help on the case. But for powder burns, she'd have to come in close.

And then, very quickly, he would have to use the knife.

So he kept his sitting position, the best position from which to launch his counter-attack. If necessary, he'd keep on sitting like this till Ned Travers showed up. He listened for the sound of the rifle, but heard nothing. Sitting up this way, he could see more clearly through the cabin's single window, and could follow the deepening and darkening of the shadows on the hills.

It was very close to dark when she

finally returned. Without a word of greeting to him, she started pulling off her outer layer of clothes.

"I didn't hear any shots," he began.

"No, I didn't shoot."

"What about the rabbit you shot yesterday?"

"She ate it."

"How do you know? It could have been some other animal."

"No, it was the cat. Her tracks were there."

"She came down out of her hiding place?"

"I knew she would. I knew she'd smell the blood."

"How bad is she hurt? Could you tell from her tracks?"

"Not very well. She dropped a little blood, though."

"What were you doing all afternoon then?"

"Hunting. But I didn't have any luck. I'm all worn out."

That much was certainly the truth. She looked as if she'd walked miles. Miles for the puma, but not one step to go and summon help for him.

She made no motion toward preparing dinner. Instead, she took the rifle from the table where she'd first laid it, and sat down with the weapon cradled in her lap. As before, however, her back was toward him, and he couldn't see what she was doing.

Was this the moment? He stiffened, checked the location of the knife under the blankets for the

hundredth time. He heard metallic noises as she worked the rifle's mechanism. But she'd have to come closer, be sure to provide those essential powder burns.

She swiveled in her chair.

"Dade," she said, "I'm afraid of this gun."

Would she really do it now? Right now? He saw through the window that the darkness was coming down fast, as it always did in this valley. Would she kill him right now and then spend the night alone here in the cabin with his corpse?

"What do you mean, afraid of it? You used it yesterday."

"I was afraid of it then," she answered. "You were carrying it when you fell, remember, Dade? I had to rescue it out of the snow. I know it must be dirty or rusty or something. I'd like to clean it before I shoot it again, Dade. Would you mind cleaning it for me, or at least show me how so I can clean it by myself?"

She stood up, holding the rifle. She took a step toward him, and his right hand gripped the hilt of the knife under the blankets. He knew her strategy. To get close enough to him with the rifle, then at the last second, swing it toward him and shoot. Tricky though. One shot would have to suffice.

"Dade, you've got to help me." she said.

It was either this, taking his chances with her now, or letting her sneak up on him in his sleep.

"Okay. Let me see what shape it's in."

He kept both arms at his sides, making it look easy for her. She came on, holding the rifle broadside still. But she waited an instant too long in swinging it. Bannock moved first, in one big, pre-planned, climactic lunge, scorning the pain in his throbbing leg. His left hand snaked out, got a firm hold on Vivian's right wrist, whirled her in toward him with a counter-clockwise motion.

She had no chance to use the gun, because his violent maneuver had brought the butt around to him, not the muzzle. Besides, she lost her balance completely, and came crashing down on top of him on the bunk. Pain slammed through his leg, but he paid no more than passing attention to it.

He let go his original grip, cupped her chin in his left hand, pulling her body back against his chest, and stretching and exposing her waiting throat.

Now his right hand emerged from the blankets. The knife blade gleamed in the dimness, though it was unlikely that Vivian ever saw it. The first she knew was probably the sharpness of the blade slicing across her throat.

Bannock held tightly to her chin as her body threshed wildly for a moment, seeming to possess a life of its own, like a decapitated chicken. He felt the gushing warmth on his knife hand. A second, several

seconds, and it was all over. He let her body go, and slid off onto the floor.

Dusk had entered the cabin now. Dusk and silence. He felt unclean, sticky with Vivian's blood. It was all over him and the blankets were a red mass.

He did not see the silhouette arriving in the window. It was already there when he happened to glance up. Perhaps the thing that had actually made him glance up was the almost sudden burst of illumination out there -- a cloud drifting off the moon. A square of lightness where the window was, and in the middle of the square, a silhouette, a dark shadow.

A shadow of a head, unmistakably feline. Two small but very pointed ears. Whiskers on the heavy muzzle.

Dade Bannock knew why the puma had come. Crazy with pain like himself, dazed and desperate with hunger, she had devoured the rabbit and followed Vivian's spoor. And now she'd ventured to the very door of the dreaded man-place, compelled, driven mad by the inviting smell of

driven mad by the inviting smell of fresh, warm blood.

The rifle still lay across his knees. He lifted it, took careful aim at the shadow and pulled the trigger. But there was no blast, no report, no hurtling of a bullet toward a target. Only a small, meaningful click.

Dade Bannock just sat puzzled for a moment.

The rifle was empty! It had been empty when Vivian brought it to him. She hadn't intended to murder him! But he'd murdered her, his protection, and it was her spilled blood which had cried out to that other hurt old female.

Dade Bannock screamed. But the scream did not frighten the puma. Her shadow remained at the window, waiting. Till Dade Bannock threw his useless body off the bunk, and his frantic fingers groped in the dimness for a box of cartridges . . . somewhere in the heavy darkness of the deserted cabin. . .

Then there was a crash of frail glass, and a dark, terrible form hurtling through the space where the glass had been.



A NEW COMPLETE MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL NEXT MONTH

Murder, Incorporated, the tabloids called them—the largest, most fearsome collection of killers ever assembled in one place. They ravaged and murdered at will, led by a pale, soft spoken little monster who was the deadliest of all. Meet Louis Lepke, infamous little grey man of Death.



LOUIS "LEPKE" BUCHALTER LAST OF THE MASS MURDERERS

MURDER INC.'S Most Feared Killer of All

by DAVID MAZROFF



MURDER INCORPORATED:
In the history of America's criminal gangs there have been many events which have brought shudders to the nation. The crimes perpetrated by Murder Inc., however, spelled the alpha and omega of viciousness and terror.

MURDER INCORPORATED!
The very term tolls like a bell over the graves of a hundred men.

The boss of this gang of piratical cutthroats and killers was a man

named Louis "Lepke" Buchalter, a short, stocky thug whose face was starched with evil. His chief lieutenant, Jacob "Gurrah" Shapiro, was equally ugly.

Both men had lost all feeling for human life somewhere in their youth. Neither had a conscience. Neither feared God, the devil, or rival hoods, whom they terrorized with the same disdain as they did the legitimate businessmen from whom they extorted millions of dollars.

Louis "Lepke" Buchalter was born on Lincoln's birthday in 1897, in New York City. He was called Lepke by his mother, the name being a diminutive of the Yiddish Louis or Label, which is pronounced as it is spelled, or in more endearing moments uttered as "Labelah", Little Louie.

Considering his savage crimes, the thought that he may have been referred to in any term of endearment strikes one as an incongruity. Yet, to be just, he was a good husband and a devoted father to the son he adopted when he married a beauteous widow named Betty Wasserman. But then Al Capone was a good husband and a doting father too.

Lepke's father was a hard-working merchant who engaged in various small businesses, and his mother was a typical Jewish home-maker, honest, religious, a woman who tried to inspire in her children a love of God, a respect for the law, and an affection for each other.

She didn't fail altogether. Among her other children were three sons and a daughter. One became a dentist, one a pharmacist, and one a clergyman. The daughter was an English teacher.

Some of the home training Lepke received was reflected in the fact that he never drank, gambled, or attached himself to the brassy blondes or show girls who flock around a top-name hood.

Physically, Lepke wasn't the hulking brute type of an Al Capone, nor

the skinny, almost cadaverous type like Legs Diamond, nor was he a flashy dresser like Joe Adonis or Lucky Luciano. He was five feet five inches tall and weighed one hundred and sixty pounds. The only redeeming feature under his dark brown hair, slash of mouth, slightly receding chin and straight blunt ears were his sad brown eyes.

When Lepke was thirteen years old his father died. Mrs. Buchalter, distraught and suffering her husband's death with an agonizing misery, tried hard to keep her family together. Within the next two years, however, she had to break up the household. She went to relatives in the West, left Lepke to the direction and guidance of his older sister.

No one at the time except the devil himself could have held Lepke in rein. He was stealing from push-carts, from candy stores, grocery stores, trucks, any place where an occasion for theft presented itself.

When he was eighteen years old, in 1915, he was picked up several times for investigation, twice charged with burglary, and twice he beat the rap.

After beating the last beef he decided to take the heat off himself and took a ride to the home of an uncle in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Since he was unknown in Bridgeport, Lepke was sure he could carry on his thefts with reasonable security and immunity.

No more than a week after his arrival he was nabbed in the act of

stealing a salesman's sample case, tried and convicted. He was sent to the Cheshire Reformatory. He was out several months later and hung up his parole—failed to make his regular monthly reports, that is—and returned to New York.

In his own backyard again Lepke went in for loft burglaries. He was nailed on a job and sent to Sing Sing Prison, where he did a year. He was let out and again went back to burglarizing lofts, and a year after his release he again was nabbed on a job. This time he served two years.

In the year he had been free between the two stretches he did in Sing Sing he became known to some of the East Side's hoodlums. They marked him for future reference because he was a "solid" guy, one who could be depended upon not to spill his guts during a police interrogation.

When Lepke got out of Sing Sing after serving his second jolt it was the year 1922, and Prohibition was in full swing. So was the era that was to become known as "The Roaring Twenties"—the years that were floated in on seas of bootleg liquor. — More important, in that year of 1922, John L. Lewis called out 500,000 miners in a strike for higher wages, and of this Louis "Lepke" Buchalter took particularly high note.

The general opinion of hoods and gangsters is that they are of a low mental type. While it is true that very few of them ever held a college degree, they nevertheless are intelli-

gent and shrewd, with the kind of brains and talent for organization displayed by the highest types of industrial and business executives.

This was emphatically shown in the careers of Al Capone, Joe Adonis, Lucky Luciano, Johnny Torrio, Owney Madden and others. Lepke was to prove he belonged in this class in every respect. He followed the pattern. Join or face extinction. *Pay up or die.*

One of the first things Lepke learned in 1922 was that the loner had little chance of survival against the packs, so he looked around for men to join his mob, and the first such man he found was Jake "Gurrah" Shapiro.

Jake Shapiro was a heavy-set, hulking, profane hoodlum with the mind of a Machiavelli, an explosive temper, and a lust for violence. He was a Russian immigrant who still had difficulty with English and earned his nickname of "Gurrah" from his shoutings at poor pushcart peddlers who refused to pay up, or couldn't pay up, for the privilege of doing business in the street.

Shapiro would yell at them, "Gurrah hyar, you bastard! Gurrah hyar!" The appellation stuck.

Shapiro was about the same age as Lepke, and without doubt instilled his philosophy, a savage and frightening one, in the dealings the two men were to have as conspirators against society and the law. "Kill all the witnesses!"

Outlaw though he was, he had a

virtue of a kind, a fierce loyalty which was to prove Lepke's greatest asset in his climb up the ladder to underworld leadership. The word was out that to hurt Lepke was to hurt Gurrah, and Gurrah would kill quickly.

As Lepke built up his organization in the year 1922, he decided that he would leave bootleg liquor and rum running to guys like Owney Madden and the up-and-coming Dutch Schultz and Legs Diamond.

"We're going into labor, Jake," he told Gurrah. "That's where the big money is to be made."

"How?"

"Organization and protection. We organize the workers and we protect the bosses."

"Both sides?"

"Both sides."

"Supposing they find this out?"

"Jakey, Jakey, listen," Lepke said and laughed. "So they find out. So who's going to do us anything?"

Gurrah shrugged. "You think so, so we do it. That's all."

THE LABOR UNIONS had not yet become the tightly organized groups they are today, with untold millions in money, strong rank and file memberships, and with high influence in the economic and political life of the nation. There were strikes, and management fought them. And here management made its big mistake and built for itself a vicious Frankenstein.

In order to break the strikes, the

bosses hired goons. The garment industry had long been a seething bed of unrest with a long history of strikes and violence.

Heading a gang of goons that fought strikers at the time was a tough hood named Li'l Augie Orgen. Orgen was a cutie. He played both ends to the middle, renting out his muscle men to the bosses and to the unions that were fighting them, and frequently in the same war. Lepke had learned this. He was going to play it the same way, but with modifications and adjustments.

In the International Tailoring Company strike, one of the most violent and bitter labor struggles in management-union history, Orgen had his goons on both sides. Lepke stepped in on the side of management.

Orgen hadn't yet learned of Jake "Gurrah" Shapiro. All he knew was that Lepke had some strong boys with him, that Lepke himself was tough, packed a gun and would use it. He didn't want a gang war that would involve him in deadly conflict with a dangerous hood. He called Lepke.

"Louis, I'd like to talk to you. Where can we meet?"

"Come to my office on Canal Street. You know the place?"

"Yeah. Good. I'll be right over."

When Orgen got to Lepke's office he found Jake Shapiro there sitting at the side of the desk. Lepke was behind it. It was the first time Orgen and Shapiro had met. Shapiro eyed

him coldly, contempt in his eyes.

Orgen said, "Louis, I don't want to fight you in this thing. But I want to keep the thing going. The longer it goes the longer both sides will have to pay off. If our boys happen to rough up each other I'd like you to know it's just part of the game. No hard feelings on my part. And none on yours?"

Lepke looked at Jake, who made a slight motion with his hand. "You know my partner, Augie? This is Jake Shapiro."

Orgen extended a hand but Shapiro ignored it and Orgen drew it back swiftly as if he hadn't extended his hand at all. He stared hard at Shapiro for a quick moment, then turned his eyes to Lepke.

"Is it a deal, Louis?" he asked.

"It's a deal. Up to a point. If we have to change our plans in any way—" He shrugged. "Well, that will be part of the game too."

"You'll let me know?"

Shapiro spoke up. "I'll let you know." The words crackled from his coarse mouth.

"Okay, you do that." He nodded to both men and walked out of the office and down the long flight of wooden stairs.

For the first time in his crime-soaked career he wasn't sure of himself. Up to this time the labor racket had been all his. Now there was competition. He felt he could talk to Lepke, make deals with him. But that guy Shapiro? The look in those ice-blue eyes was enough to scare the



JAKE "GURRAH" SHAPIRO

hide off a wolf. A wolf? Yeah. A human wolf.

Orgen gave a quick shudder.

The season of violence was turned on with a vengeance by both Orgen and Lepke. In the forefront of Lepke's mob was Shapiro, a muscle-packed hulk with hands as big as hams, and under his coat two .45 caliber automatics.

Acid was spilled like water over merchandise that wasn't burned or ripped to shreds. A dress company official was tossed out of a tenth-floor window, his screams, as he kept falling, tearing through the morning.

Workers and management officials alike were beaten in the streets, in street cars, offices, in their homes, their faces slashed, heads broken.

Buildings were profaned, strewn with animal and human offal, hundreds of windows broken, stink bombs hurled by the dozens.

When the strike was finally over, the cunning Lepke offered L'il Augie a very sound business proposition.

"Come to my office, Augie. I got something interesting to say to you."

Augie came running. He climbed the long flight of wooden stairs two at a time, anxious to hear what he hoped Lepke would tell him. He had seen Jake "Gurrah" Shapiro in action. He had seen the men with Shapiro wreak their particular brand of violence. He had seen Shapiro standing at the window with a malicious grin on his face after he had thrown the hapless man out to the street ten stories below.

He feared Shapiro as a rat fears a snake.

The shabby office with its bare desk and three chairs and the paint peeling from the walls was as uninviting to the eyes as the sight of Shapiro sitting in the same chair, his ice-blue eyes greeting Orgen as he came in.

Augie smiled broadly at both men to indicate his friendliness but did not extend his hand to either.

"Sit down, Augie," Lepke said. Augie took the vacant chair and sat down. "You and your boys did a good job."

"So did yours." Orgen smiled in appreciation. "Everything worked out swell. Everybody made a nice bundle of money."

"That's right, Augie," Lepke

agreed. "Now, here's what we want to talk to you about. We'll pool our men. You got contacts. We got contacts. Anybody wants work done they got to come to us. Together, we'll keep everybody else out. How does that sound to you?"

Autie Orgen shot Shapiro a quick look and ran a hand over his face in a nervous gesture, then licked his dry lips with his tongue. He was elated inwardly but didn't want to show it. Tying in with Lepke and Gurrah would eliminate the threat Shapiro presented to him.

"This will be a fifty-fifty deal?" Orgen said. We cut everything down the middle. Is that right?"

"Didn't you hear what Louie said, Orgen?" Shapiro snapped. "He said we put our men together. Your men. Our men. We are even then. Partners."

"Sure, sure, Jake. Great. I like that. I'll tell my boys."

"Good," Lepke said. "Tell them we'll have a meeting in the garage on Houston street. Tomorrow at noon. Tell your boys to be there."

Shapiro snapped, "All of them, Orgen. We want they should know the whole setup."

"Sure, sure. We'll be there."

Augie left, confident, convinced he now had nothing more to fear from Lepke or Shapiro. He was their partner. What he didn't know was that this whole plan was no more than a plot to assimilate his men and then push him out, one way or another. Preferably another. The

chance to eliminate him, with reason and justification, was furnished by Orgen himself.

ORGEN WAS BORN Jacob Orgen in 1902. Like Lepke, he had been a petty thief in his youth. He committed every crime in the book, from burglary to robbery, assault to murder. Just five and a half feet tall, slim, quick, he moved with incredible speed from one racket to another so that the cops never really got a line on him, or could fix an M.O.—the *Modus Operandi* by which many crooks and criminals are identified.

He became a gang leader in 1923 when his youngest follower, Louie “The Clown” Kushner knocked off the notorious Kid Dropper, a Yiddisher born Jack Kaplan, in a brazen daylight murder on the Lower East Side.

Orgen got his first attention by the cops when he was twenty years old. He was extorting money from merchants and shopkeepers in the foreign tenement districts in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn under threats of smashing property and setting fires. He gained a great deal of prestige among his followers and rival hoods by being arrested three times for felonious assault and each time beating the rap. And each time he beat the rap he insisted on more money from the merchants.

“You bastards got me pinched so you’re gonna pay for it,” he told the merchants. “My mouthpiece is expensive.”

He turned then to supplying hoods to laundry firms for the purpose of wrecking rivals’ plants and deliveries. Incidents of fires, broken windows, wrecked equipment were common in the Brownsville, Coney Island, and Williamsburg sections of Brooklyn.

When the “Wet Wash” business moved to Manhattan and the Bronx, Li’l Augie moved too. He then went into the business of strike breaking and strike making, serving both the unions of the workers and the amalgamations of the bosses. And then he ran headlong into Louis “Lepke” Buchalter and Jake “Gurrah” Shapiro. He was ready to be taken out of the picture, and very soon.

A strike developed in the painting trade and the bosses called in Orgen and offered him \$50,000 in cash to end the strike.

“We don’t care how you do it, Mr. Orgen,” one of the bosses said, “but just end it, in any way possible.”

“I’ll end it. Let me see the color of your money.”

One of the other bosses reached into a drawer of a desk and handed over two sheafs of bills. “There’s twenty-five thousand in each packet, Mr. Orgen. You can count it if you like.”

“I’ll take your word for it. You can sit back and relax. This strike is over.” Orgen smiled broadly, flicked the brim of his hat with a thumb and forefinger, bowed slightly and

walked out of the office, leaving the eight bosses grinning with satisfaction.

Augie Orgen had taken the contract on his own, without the agreement of Lepke, Shapiro, or Curly Holtz, who was a lieutenant in the new combination of the two mobs. In so doing he signed his death warrant.

An official of the union, who was a friend of Jack Holtz, Curly's brother, asked Jack to do what he could to "keep the boys out of this one."

"Sure thing. I'll go talk to my brother and ask him to stay outta this thing. I'm sure he'll do it for me and because you and me is friends. Y'got nothin' to worry about, Tommy."

Curly heard out his brother, then said, "I gotta talk with Lepke and Gurrah first. Stick around. They should be back in about a half hour or so."

When Lepke and Gurrah came in, Curly introduced his brother. "He's got something he wants to talk over with us. Go ahead, Jack. Tell them your proposition."

Jack Holtz explained.

"What's in it for you, if we lay off?" Lepke asked.

"Nothing. A favor for a friend. But I was told I should say the union will kick in with twenty big ones if you will lay off."

"Whatta you guys say?" Lepke asked Gurrah and Curly.

"For the brother of Curly?"

Gurrah said. "Why not? It's okay by me."

"You know my answer," Curly said. "This is my kid brother."

"Okay," Lepke said, "you go back and tell your friend we'll lay off. Tell him I said it's a favor to you. Understand? The next time you need a little consideration from them guys you'll get it. That's the way it's done."

"Thanks, Mr. Lepke, thanks very much."

"The name's Buchalter, Jack."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Buchalter." He shook hands with Lepke and Gurrah, smiled at his brother, who gave him a pat on the shoulder, and left.

A short time after he left, Augie Orgen came into the office, smiled broadly, and threw the two packets of money on the desk. "Fifty grand." He hefted each packet meaningfully and then very deliberately laid it down directly in front of Lepke.

"What's it for?" Lepke asked.

Orgen spread his hands. "A mere nothin'. We break up the painters' strike."

Gurrah let out a loud laugh. Curly scowled. Lepke stared at the money, then at Orgen, who burned inwardly but didn't dare show it.

"Take it back," Lepke said calmly. "We're not doing business with the bosses on this one."

"Why not? What the hell's the difference? We take on both sides!"

"Not this time, Augie," Lepke said again. "Take the money back."

"I don't get it. There's fifty grand there. Fifty grand. Why the hell should I have to take it back?"

Mōney always had held a gleaming fascination for Augie that he just couldn't resist. He gathered up the bills, gave each of the three men a solemn look through narrowed eyes and left. He didn't take the money back, however, but went instead to Legs Diamond and offered the skinny hood a half interest if he would help him break the strike.

"Why me, Augie? You got your own boys, haven't you?"

"No, not exactly. I put in with Buchalter and Shapiro, the two mobs together. I can't use any of my boys on this one 'cause they ain't really my boys."

Diamond shook his head. "Augie, I thought you had more sense than that. Gurrah Shapiro! God! You would've done better if you'd teamed up with a pack of hyenas. And Lepke is no better. Smoother, a lot quieter, but just as deadly. What the hell made you do it?"

"That's water under the bridge, Legs," Augie answered testily. "What I wanna know now is will you come in with me on this?"

Legs was unfamiliar with labor troubles. His rackets involved liquor, dope, and gambling. "I'll have to think it over, Augie. I just can't say right off I'll agree. I want to check this out."

"There ain't much time, Legs. I have to move fast. When will I know?"



LEPKE BUCHALTER

"Tomorrow."

After Orgen left Lepke, Gurrah, and Curly Holtz, Lepke called one of the bosses in the painting trade. "I want you to tell me when Augie Orgen kicks back that fifty grand you gave him to break this strike. I want you to call me no later than five o'clock this afternoon. Understand? Here's my number."

"Why not come over to our side, Mr. Buchalter?" the boss asked. "I think you'll find it more profitable."

"I'm sure. But I can't. Maybe next time. But you call me on this matter. I'll be waiting."

The boss sighed resignedly. "Okay, Mr. Buchalter. I'll do it. At five o'clock this afternoon."

At five o'clock, Lepke got the

call. Orgen had not kicked back the money. Lepke turned to Gurrah and Curly. "He didn't kick it back. Okay, this is it. We'll do this hit ourselves."

"Should we tell some of the boys why?" Curly asked. "I mean, some of Orgen's boys who're with us?"

Maybe we should, Lepke," Gurrah said. "A couple of the boys. They can pass the word to the other."

"Okay. You do that, Curly. Gurrah and I will take a look at Orgen meanwhile."

"I'd like to be in on this, Lepke."

"Gurrah can handle it. I'll be in the car. Maybe you can drive a second car, right behind us, just in case. Okay. We'll do it like that."

THE NEXT DAY, on a cool October afternoon, two black sedans moved slowly along a Lower East Side Street. The sidewalks were crowded with shoppers, with men, women, and children. The pushcart peddlers were hawking their wares in loud voices. Trucks honked their horns in shrieking demands for clear passage on the street.

Lepke drove slowly while Gurrah scanned the sidewalk. In the car behind them was Curly Holtz, alias "Little Hymie", a gun on the seat, as watchful as Gurrah.

"There he is!" Gurrah snapped. "That skinny Legs Diamond is with him. He gets it too?"

"No. Only Orgen. If Diamond gets in the way, drop him but don't finish him. Give Curly the signal."

Gurrah stuck a hand out the car window and pointed to Orgen and Legs Diamond about fifteen feet ahead. Curly understood and picked up his gun, ready in case he had to use it. Lepke pushed down a little harder on the accelerator and the sedan moved ahead of Orgen and Diamond.

"Okay, Gurrah," Lepke said, and stopped. Shapiro jumped out of the sedan and ran in front of the two men, gun in hand.

"Gurrah the way, Diamond!" Shapiro commanded. "Move! Move, y'bastard!"

Li'l Augie started to plead. "Don't kill me, Jake! Don't! I can explain—"

There was no buying back his life with pleas, because Shapiro had a one-track mind. All his senses and emotions had been fused to center on one thing, killing Orgen. That's all he understood.

He leveled the gun at Orgen and fired. He hit him in the head and chest, emptied the gun and snatched another from under his coat. As he did so, Diamond reached for his gun, but he was too slow. Gurrah shot him in the shoulder and he dropped the gun.

Gurrah walked swiftly to the car, got in, and Lepke swung into the street and roared away, leaving pandemonium behind.

Lepke and Gurrah went into hiding. So did Curly Holtz. They came out of hiding after a while, were arrested and charged with murder.

There were no witnesses. Legs Diamond said he didn't get a look at the killer at all.

"The bullets came so fast all I could do was duck."

Buchalter, Shapiro, and Holtz were released for lack of evidence.

Jacom "Li'l Augie" Orgen was buried on October 23, 1927, in the Mount Judah Cemetery in Cypress Hills. His head had four holes and his body three. He was buried in a mahogany coffin, lined with satin, and bearing two silver plates reading, "Jacob Orgen, aged twenty-five years."

His family, respectable, law-abiding people, chose a plot of ground beneath a hedge in the cemetery for Augie's last resting place. A monotonous rain pelted down out of a glum sky as four grave diggers in rubber boots shoveled earth over the casket. Augie's young and attractive widow wept bitterly, as did his mother and sisters.

The hoods who had come to pay their last respects were serious-faced, as were the four plainclothes detectives and three uniformed policemen. That was the setting for the little East Side kid when he was buried, and with him the dreams of being a big-time gang leader like Al Capone in Chicago.

After Orgen's demise, Lepke and Gurrah took over completely and here Lepke indicated his genius for organization. Why just hire out as goons and strike breakers? Why just be hired hands? Why not control the

whole thing, the whole industry, and take a big piece of the pie?

Gurrah smiled. "Why not, Lepke? You say so, we do it!"

And that was the beginning of Murder, Inc. Profane, obscene, repulsive, and evil it was. The hulking, venomous Gurrah was put in charge of recruiting new members and he selected them with an eye as to their efficiency with the gun, the brass knucks, the ice-pick, and their knowledge of mixing cement.

The plans were big and a big organization would be needed to carry them out. Gurrah the Gorilla recruited some two hundred men, the biggest collection of thugs and killers ever gathered together under the control and aegis of a single underworld boss.

The soft-eyed, soft-spoken Louis "Lepke" Buchalter and the loud-mouthed Jake "Gurrah" Shapiro with his broken nose, big ears, and thick lips were now the king and crown prince of New York's labor movements. They were also the daggers at the throats of legitimate businesses.

In the gang Gurrah had recruited were Albert Anastasia, Abe "Kid Twist" Reles, Happy Maione, Dasher Abbandando, Mendy Weiss, Allie Tannenbaum, Pittsburgh Phil Strauss, Vito Gurino, and Louis Capone—no relation to Chicago's Al. These men, out of the two hundred in the gang, are mentioned because they were most instrumental in the rise and fall of Lepke.

With the gang organized, Lepke moved fast. His first attack was on the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. There were about 35,000 workers in Amalgamated at the time, and of these only about 1700 or so were cutters. Also, about 85 or 90 were truckers. So, if the truckers didn't deliver the cloth, or if they did and the cutters didn't cut it, the industry would be at a standstill. If, Lepke thought, he could gain control of the truckers and cutters unions he would have the industry coming and going. He called Maxie Rubin, a strong-arm organizer, into his plush office.

"Maxie," Lepke said, "there's a couple of tough guys at the head of the cutters union. Abe Slabow and Terry Burns. You know 'em?"

"Sure. They ain't so tough. They just think they're tough. You want me to take them?"

"I want the cutters union, Maxie. Who do you want along with you on this job?"

"All depends. You want these guys hit or just calmed down?"

"That's up to you. All I want is these guys out and us in. You do it the best way."

"Okay. I'll take Reles, Strauss, Tannenbaum, and Weiss."

"Fine. Go ahead."

The five men walked into the cutters union headquarters and found both Slabow and Terry Burns. They looked up at the five men and knew they were in trouble.

Slabow tried to brazen it out. "Whatta you boys want here?"

Pittsburgh Phil Strauss, a big man, all muscle, mean and deadly as a hungry tiger on the prowl, smashed his fist into Slabow's face, breaking his nose. Reles and Tannenbaum went to work on Burns. Weiss and Maxie Rubin moved in to assist Strauss.

The beatings were systematic, vicious. The pummeling went on for minutes. When it was over Slabow and Burns were more dead than alive. Maxie motioned to Strauss to lift the two men from the floor and sit them in chairs.

"You guys listen good," Rubin said to the two union men. "As of this minute you guys no longer are in this union. We're taking it over. If you ever come back here, if you ever stick your nose into the cutters union you're gonna wind up dead as a herring. Throw your keys to the doors and the cabinets on the desk. Good. Now get out and tell yourself you're lucky. It would've been just as easy to kill you."

LÉPKE BUCHALTER called a meeting of all the cutters the next day. With him in the meeting hall were Gurrah, Albert Anastasia, the boss of the killer group, Maxie Rubin, Pittsburgh Phil, and Abe Reles. The cutters, mostly immigrants from Europe, men who had known the whips of the Cossacks, recognized in Lepke and his men another form of terror. But Lepke Buchalter fooled them—in part that is.

"Fellow members," Lepke said in his soft voice, "you are the most important workers in the trade. You are not being paid enough. Under our supervision you will receive a twenty-five cents an hour increase. Not next year, next month, but on your next pay. This much I promise and guarantee you. This means you will receive some fifteen dollars more a week."

There was wild applause.

Lepke smiled and held up a hand. "There is a great deal of expense in the operation of a union, as you well know. When the increase in your pay is in your hands we shall expect you to turn over to the union three dollars weekly as dues. That's a fair sum. You get twelve dollars and the union, your protectors, gets only three dollars. We want everybody to be satisfied. Is there anyone here who objects?"

There was a long moment of silence and then a voice in broken English spoke up. "We only was paying a dollah mit a half a month. Now it's gonna be twelfe dollahs a month. It's not high, yes?"

"Come up here, mister," Lepke said.

A small man disengaged himself from the crowd and approached the platform. Lepke helped the man up.

"What's your name?"

"Sam Rosenberg."

"How much are you making a week now?"

"Fifty-one dollahs mit fifty cents."



AUGIE ORGEN.

"And you paid a dollar and a half month dues, is that right?" he asked him scornfully.

"That's right."

"Fine. You keep on paying a dollar and a half. And you keep your same wages. I'll tell your boss everybody gets a raise but you. Okay? You satisfied?"

Everyone in the audience laughed. There were catcalls and other jeering sounds at Rosenberg. He looked over the crowd and made a noise in his throat. He was the only one in the audience of cutters who understood that this was only the beginning, that dues would be increased from time to time but not wages.

It was hopeless. He couldn't fight these crooks, these tough guys, and

he couldn't fight the men with whom he worked, his friends. He resigned himself.

Lepke set up his double collection system immediately. He demanded fifty cents an hour increase for the cutters or, he threatened, he could call a strike that would break the industry. Since this was the busy season the owners of shops were at his mercy. They bargained with him. He propositioned.

He pointed out that it would cost the bosses fifty thousand dollars a week in additional payroll if they met his demands of fifty cents an hour increase.

"I'm willing to play ball," he told the group.

They were gathered in a suite in the Park Central Hotel. Sitting next to Lepke was Gurrah, and next to Gurrah, Albert Anastasia. The three men virtually overpowered the dozen bosses around the table. The smell of violence hung heavy over the heads of the three men and the bosses could almost taste its acridness.

"What's your proposition?" a boss asked.

"I'm willing to cut the demand in half. That will save you boys twenty-five thousand a week. Well, not quite. We want five thousand of that twenty-five each week. We'll set up a schedule of rates according to the number of men employed in each of your plants. That's what you'll pay. You can charge it to advertising, public relations, anything you want. It's deductible operating expense.

That's my position. It won't change. Now lower. You can have an hour to discuss it. If we don't get a positive answer by that time, everything will go up. We'll be back in an hour, gentlemen."

The bosses conceded.

This was Lepke, an evil genius in organization, matching in intelligence and ability fellow gangsters Al Capone, Johnny Torrio, and Charlie "Lucky" Luciano, among others.

Lepke welded his connections with most of the city's gang leaders, among them Charlie Lucky. He was long-sighted in this. He knew that many of the boys heading the different unions had connections with one or the other of the mobs. To hit a union leader without approval might result in serious consequences.

He wanted to avoid that, not because he feared his own life would be in danger but because he didn't want to be involved in a gang war which would bring heat. A case in point was Salvatore Maranzano.

Maranzano was the boss of the truckers union, which Lepke wanted as part two of his plan to take over industry. He went to Luciano.

"Charlie, your boy Maranzano has been working too hard. I think he needs a rest."

Luciano eyed Lepke through narrowed eyes. "How long, Louis?"

Lepke shrugged. "His strength is gone. I'd say permanently."

Luciano said, "Well, maybe you're right. He's one of the old

order, the Mustache Petes. I think he's worn out his welcome. Go ahead. You got my okay."

That was all for Salvatore Maranzano.

Lepke now had the cutters and the truckers unions, and then he went on to take over the needle trades industrial group, the huge rabbit fur industry, and the bakery truckmen's local. He did it by blowing a business agent to bits, by beating another agent almost to death, by bombing homes, stores, factories, by stench bombings, by mayhem, and by murder.

When he took over the unions he shook down the bosses, each and every one of them, for sums ranging from \$500 to \$100,000, and in many cases he took over the entire business.

If he couldn't do that, he took half the business. He took half of Lou Cooper's profitable Garfield Express, a trucking firm in Passaic, New Jersey. He wound up with a big share of Branch Stores, a highly successful New Jersey enterprise. He extorted money from the small, intermediate, and the large businesses. He got thousands of dollars from the Gottfried Baking Company, and from the nationally famous Mrs. Wagner's Pies Company.

No one, it seemed, could stop Lepke. He went after the poultry markets, restaurants, the shoe trade, milliners, leather workers, taxicabs. He drove Dutch Schultz out of the restaurant rackets, and with Lucky

Luciano as a partner he took over the cleaning and dyeing industry. He took over the handbag makers.

Buchalter was the human octopus, his tentacles everywhere, his greedy fingers dipping into the cash drawers of every legitimate business in New York.

The large army of hoods recruited by Gurrah had to be paid off weekly and his estimated weekly payroll was well over fifty thousand dollars. That money came from extortion. The hoods and muscle men, however, were kept busy and earned their pay.

They were ensconced in union offices as business agents, organizers, strike breakers and strike makers. They acted as collectors and enforcers. They were called upon to commit murder for other gang leaders, not only in New York but in Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Miami, and on the West Coast.

There came at this time the formation of The Syndicate or, as it has been referred to by the U.S. Senate Investigating Committees, the National Crime Cartel, to control the rackets throughout the nation. Lepke was assigned the important post of "Judge", the man who sentenced violators of underworld laws. Not only did he act in the capacity of judge but he also selected the men who would execute his sentences, and the word definitely was "execute."

With millions of dollars in his hands Louis "Lepke" Buchalter, boss of Murder, Inc., now lived the

millionaire he was. He had luxury apartments at swank addresses, dressed his wife Betty in furs and jewels, and gave his adopted son a fabulous allowance. He hobnobbed only with the top hoods. His close pals were Lucky Luciano, Joe Adonis, Longy Zwillman, Bugsy Siegel, Albert Anastasia, and his partner, Jake "Gurrah" Shapiro.

Gurrah, however, didn't want to play around with the boys. He went on his own merry way, spent his huge profits as he always had wanted to spend money, on beautiful show girls and the finest champagne and caviar. He once said, "In Russia, the dirty Cossacks and the lousy royalty wouldn't give a peasant like me the smell from a champagne bottle or one little egg of caviar. Now, *I am royalty!*"

In his way, in the gray depths of the devil's underworld, he was a king.

Having achieved their niche as top bosses of the top rackets, Lepke and Gurrah now delegated the rather routine tasks of keeping things moving properly to their lieutenants and other underlings.

Albert Anastasia, who was the High Lord Executioner, took care of assigning men to eliminate witnesses of one kind or another who threatened to appear against one or another of the boys in the Syndicate. There were innumerable murders, too, involving such stubborn characters as legitimate merchants and businessmen who refused to pay off for protection.

Shakedowns, extortions, mayhem, murders went on, in New York, Brooklyn, New Jersey. How many actual killings were done no one really knows. Men were found dead in the streets, stuffed in the trunks of automobiles, in barrels of cement, or lying in lime-filled pits. They were murdered. Someone killed them. And invariably, after lengthy investigation, the evidence pointed to Murder, Inc., to Lepke, Gurrah, Anastasia, Abe Reles, Pittsburgh Phil, and some lesser lights.

They believed themselves beyond the law, beyond retaliation from all men.

They were wrong. The beginning of the end had arrived.

THE INCIDENT WHICH indirectly was responsible for the downfall of Lepke, Gurrah, and Murder, Inc., was an inauspicious one, far removed from the bosses of Murder, Inc., and Lepke gave it little heed. Yet, it is the unknown things, the trivial matters, the disconnected incidents, which add their own small brands to the fires until the flames, like searching tongues, find the intruding lives and consume them.

So it was when the Manhattan Grand Jury in 1935 began a probe of the numbers racket and Dutch Schultz.

Dutch Schultz never had been associated with Lepke, and the Grand Jury did not even remotely concern itself with the Brooklyn boss of the labor rackets, so Lepke paid

the whole investigation little attention. But it was this Grand Jury which opened the doors that led to the hallways reeking with the stench of Lepke's many crimes.

William C. Dodge, then District Attorney for Manhattan, was botching the case against Schultz. The Grand Jury discovered that Dodge had received considerable sums of money from Dutch during his election campaign. The figure was put between \$25,000 and \$50,000. The Grand Jury decided it had enough of Dodge and petitioned Governor Herbert Lehman to appoint a special prosecutor to continue in Dodge's place.

The man Governor Lehman selected was an exceptionally capable young lawyer in the Federal Attorney's office named Thomas E. Dewey. It was Dewey who then obtained an indictment against Schultz for income tax evasion.

Schultz, who was *personna non grata* with the Syndicate, nevertheless appealed to the Syndicate's board of governors for relief, and the relief he sought was the murder of Dewey.

The meeting of the board of directors of the Syndicate was held in Lucky Luciano's plush apartment. Schultz bordered on near hysteria as he argued his case.

"This guy Dewey has gotta go!" Dutch cried. "He wants to send me to jail first, and then he'll send you guys to jail! I'm telling you I know what I'm talking about. You gotta

give me the okay to take him. You gotta help me do it!"

The Syndicate, if it were to have made a choice at the time, would have elected to eliminate Schultz rather than Dewey. The Dutchman, a hothead, had lost his restaurant racket to Lepke. His gang had been dissolved, assimilated by the various groups within the inner circle of the Syndicate. His multi-million dollar numbers racket in Harlem had been taken over also and placed under the guidance of Joey Rao and Joe Stracci, Syndicate gunmen.

The boys in the Syndicate may have felt a little sorry for Dutch so they were listening to him. One man, however, was on Schultz' side, Jake "Gurrah" Shapiro.

"Dutch is right," Shapiro declared. "This Dewey's gotta be hit. He's a lotta trouble. If he puts away Schultz then he gets the big head and he goes after everybody. He ain't no good. He's a cop."

"Jake," Lepke said, "this guy is also a fed. Too hot. You hit him and the whole government comes down on our necks."

Lucky Luciano agreed with Lepke.

Gurrah looked at his partner and shook his head sadly. It was the first time in their long association that Lepke had failed to agree with him.

"Lepke, listen to me," Shapiro said. "This is for your good. For mine. For everybody here. This is not for Schultz. For us. Lepke, for you. Vote a hit."

Lepke was moved by Gurrah's appeal but he refused to vote for the hit. "Dewey don't count, Jake. Let's do it our way. Let's get the witnesses, if there'll be any, when the time comes. No witnesses, no case. Besides, Dewey can only stay in New York City. That's what our mouth-piece said. New York's his jurisdictional limits. He can't touch us."

Schultz, backed by Gurrah's agreement, became bold, faced down the rest of the group. He stood up and pounded the table. "You won't help me, then I gotta help myself. I say Dewey's gotta be hit! If you guys won't do it then I'll do it myself!"

There was immediate silence in the room as the men stared at each other in disbelief. Schultz had defied the Syndicate ruling, openly, to their faces. Luciano ended the meeting. Several hours later, in a secret conclave, over Gurrah's protests, Lepke sentenced Schultz to death.

On October 23, 1935, Charlie "The Bug" Workman and Mendy Weiss were assigned to get Schultz. They caught up with Schultz in the Palace Chophouse in Newark, New Jersey. They killed Schultz and three of his henchmen, Ab Landau, Lulu Rosenkrantz and Abbadabba Berman. Thus was Dewey's life saved, and the investigations which he launched went on at full speed.

Lepke continued to ridicule Dewey's efforts. "He's a punk, a small-town lawyer trying to make a name for himself. Where's he gonna get corroboration? What two guys

are gonna put each other in the chair?"

It was a provocative question but it had answers. Gurrah said as much.

Thomas E. Dewey continued his assaults against the New York underworld, and in the summer of 1937 he began to make things hotter than the weather for Lepke, who was free on bail for a 1935 conviction for "Violating the Anti-Trust Laws and Interference With Interstate Commerce."

Lepke decided to take it on the lam until things cooled off. Using Albert Anastasia and Abe "Kid Twist" Reles as his front men he directed the gang's workings from his hideout.

The killings, when necessary, didn't cease because Lepke was still *The Judge* and still bossed his killers. Efforts to locate Lepke grew, and as they continued to grow he naturally became hotter and hotter until finally he became the hottest fugitive outlaw since John Dillinger. Rewards for his arrest and capture totaled \$50,000.

Twenty hand-picked New York detectives were put on the hunt for him, and J. Edgar Hoover sent FBI agents almost around the world on tips which placed Lepke in one place or another. The heat kept getting hotter and hotter.

Lepke knew that the police, the FBI, Dewey and his staff, and all other authorities that wanted him, would use every means to get him, and one of those means would surely

be his own mob, members of the various branches of The Syndicate who might have information and who might be persuaded to part with it. He now trusted only three men, Gurrah, Anastasia, and Reles, and one of them was to be his Judas.

Fearful of capture, a prison cell, and very likely the hot seat, Lepke became a violent paranoid. He issued orders to Reles and Anastasia to rub out any and all men who might weaken and turn stoolie. He commanded these executions promiscuously, not knowing for a certainty whether the men he ordered killed would turn on him or not. But he was being driven by fear, the same kind of fear and hysteria that had driven Schultz, and he now understood why Schultz had been so insistent that Dewey be rubbed out.

He mentioned the possibility of having Dewey rubbed out to Anastasia.

"Would it help me if he was hit, Albert?" Lepke asked.

"Not now, Louis. He's got a dozen assistants on his staff. Anyone could step in and take over. They're not gonna stop 'till they get you. That's the word. The heat's on everybody. Cops are offering all kinds of deals to every stoolie in New York to turn you in."

"Who knows where I am?"

"Just Reles and me. And I don't trust Reles. I don't trust anybody no more. I've got a new place for you to move to. We'll go there tonight. Nobody will know but me."

"Where's Gurrah?"

"On the lam. Nobody knows."

"I need him, damn it! Why isn't he here?"

Anastasia shook his head. "Louis, he's as hot as you. They want to nail him to the cross as badly as they want to nail you."

Lepke paced the room of the flat in Brooklyn where he was in hiding. It was a three-room affair in a miserable neighborhood. He hadn't seen his wife or son for two years. They didn't dare come to him because they were being watched day and night.

He knew as he paced the room that his power had been reduced to the same zero as had Schultz's. His prestige and standing in The Syndicate was gone. Only a handful of his killers were still loyal, among them Pittsburg Phil Strauss and Bugsy Goldstein. Anastasia told him that Happy Maione and Dasher Abbandando were still solid.

"Four men, Louis. Strauss, Goldstein, Maione and Abbandando. Those I'm sure of. The rest—" He waved a hand. "Nothing."

"Tell them to kill everybody they think might go downtown to talk to Dewey!"

Anastasia shrugged. "Okay, Louis. If you think it'll help."

Over a dozen men were killed in the ensuing months, and then The Syndicate called a halt. Anastasia was ordered to stop the killings. He appeared before the Board of Governors with four gunmen prodd-

ing him into a suite in a midtown hotel.

"Albert, listen good. The killings are burning up the town. There's more heat on us now than there's been in a year of Sundays. You stop them! One more thing. We've got the word that unless Lepke is turned in there's going to be a mass arrest of every known member of the Syndicate all over the country. They're going to file charges against everybody who's picked up, either real or phony, until we produce Lepke.

"That's the word. Now, we're going to try to make a deal with the feds to try Lepke, or he can cop a plea, and we'll see to it that the feds don't turn Lepke over to Dewey. You tell him that. That will take the heat off everybody."

The speaker paused, and added pointedly, "Including you!"

"The cops got nothing on me," Anastasia snapped.

"Maybe not. But we have. Take it from there."

Anastasia took the word back to Lepke. "They want you to cop out to that narcotics beef, take some time and while you're serving your sentence they'll try to square things in town."

"Do you think they'll do it?"

"Hell no! They're only trying to save their own skins. You stay put. The longer you hide out the better chance you got of beating Dewey."

Lepke ran a nervous hand through his hair. "This is worse than being in prison. I not only have to stay in this

stinking two by four room but I got to worry about being arrested."

"At least you still have a chance. Once you give up you won't have any. Stick it out for a little while longer."

"Okay," Lepke answered wearily. "What the hell else can I do? Have you heard anything about Gurrah?"

"Yeah. He gave himself up this morning. He walked into the Federal Detention House on West Street and said, 'I'm Jake Shapiro. I think you're looking for me.' They threw his can into a cell. It's in all the papers."

This was too much for Lepke. He was ready to turn himself in too. Again Anastasia argued him out of it. "Stay put, Louis! We'll get everybody who might talk against you. We still got four good men. They're behind you all the way."

The four men went on a murder rampage in an effort to save their boss. Some were stabbed with ice picks, shot and dropped into Catskill Mountain streams. One became a pyre. Phil Orlovsky, a potential witness against Lepke, was scheduled for death. In their zeal to kill Orlovsky the four gunmen shot to death Irving Penn, an innocent music publisher. New York was aroused. Gurrah, meanwhile, was tried and convicted on several charges of extortion and sentenced to long terms in prison. Lepke made his decision to surrender. Despite all arguments by Anastasia that he was surrendering his life, Lepke was adamant.

"I'll take my chances. The Syndicate can't afford to hand me the double-cross. They've got to help me."

"They can't. Don't you understand that, Louis?"

"Not this time, Albert. You call Walter Winchell and tell him I'm giving myself up and make the meet."

Anastasia sighed. "Okay, Louis. If that's what you want."

ON A HOT, fateful August 24, 1939, Albert Anastasia drove Lepke from Brooklyn to Fifth Avenue and 29th Street and let him out. Lepke stood there on the corner and gazed all around him, wanting to take in the territory where he once had been king, a section of the city which housed the fur and garment industry.

"Where's Hoover and Winchell waiting?" he asked.

"On the next block. Twenty-eighth Street. You sure you want to do this? You can still change your mind."

"No. I'll go on from here alone." He extended a hand.

"Good-by, Albert. You've been a good friend."

The two men embraced, and then Lepke walked slowly down Fifth Avenue to 28th Street, where he found the chief of the FBI and Walter Winchell, famed columnist, waiting for him in a car.

Lepke was tried and convicted of narcotics smuggling and sentenced to fourteen years in a federal prison.

The government then turned him over to Dewey, and the man destined to become governor of the State of New York and the Republican candidate for President of the United States, convicted Lepke of extortions in the bakery trade. He was sentenced to thirty years to life, to be served after he completed his federal sentence. Lepke fumed, swore, threatened, knew he had been double-crossed but didn't know the worst was yet to come.

Early in 1940, Pretty Levine and Duke Maffetore were picked up, and both these minor hoods in Murder, Inc., talked long and loud. Immediately after, Lepke got the word that Abe Reles, Allie Tannenbaum, and Charlie "The Bug" Workman had been arrested and charged with murder.

Reles broke early. It took about six weeks to break Allie. Only Charlie "The Bug" Workman held out. He was offered his choice of either witness or defendant in a murder trial and declined both.

District Attorney O'Dwyer convicted Happy Maione and Frank "Dasher" Abbando of murder on the testimony of Reles and Allie Tannenbaum and the two were sentenced to death. The next two to be sentenced to death were Strauss and Goldstein. The fifth man was Irving Nitzberg.

Reles talked and talked. Judge Franklin Taylor took a hand in the examination of Reles.

"Did you kill Puggy Feinstein?"

"I had a hand in it."

"Who were the others?"

"Strauss and Goldstein."

"Did you kill George Rudnick?"

"I had a hand in it?"

"Who were the others?"

"Maione and Abbando."

"Did you kill the Shapiro brothers, Willie, Irving, and Meyer?"

"I killed one of them."

"Did you kill a man named 'Jake the Painter'?"

"I helped. Strauss and Maione were with me."

"Who ordered these killings?"

"Lepke and Gurrah."

"What other names are they known by?"

"Louis Buchalter and Jacob Shapiro."

Reles recited murder after murder, a man named Greenblatt, another Ruocco, and finally Joe Rosen. This was the testimony O'Dwyer wanted.

O'Dwyer transferred Reles and Tannenbaum to Newark, New Jersey, where the two men appeared before a grand jury and gave testimony against Charlie "The Bug" Workman in the murder of Dutch Schultz.

Lepke knew that he was next on O'Dwyer's bill of fare. All the precautions he had taken, and he had taken enough to warrant the belief that he knew law as well as he knew rackets, proved to be insufficient to protect him now. He had spread his killers around when there was a murder to be done. He knew the law of corroboration in New York State:

"A conviction cannot be had upon the testimony of an accomplice, unless he be corroborated by such other evidence as tends to connect the defendant with the commission of the crime."

There was, too, the law on accomplices:

"A person concerned in the commission of a crime, whether he directly commits the act constituting the offense or aids and abets its commission, and whether present or absent, and a person who directly or indirectly counsels, commands, induces or procures another to commit a crime is a principal."

"Yes, it was true," Lepke told himself. "I'm hooked." If he couldn't be convicted on the instance of the law of corroboration then he surely could be on the law on accomplices.

Lepke, Mendy Weiss, and Louis Capone were duly charged with the murder of Joe Rosen, a murder long forgotten by Lepke because Rosen had been an ineffectual candy store owner who had been brutally slain by Mendy Weiss and Pittsburgh Phil.

Rosen had known a little too much and had been told to get out of town. He was willing but he wanted Lepke to pay his expenses while he was evading Dewey's investigators. Lepke refused. It was the worst mistake of his life. Rosen said then that he would go downtown and talk to Dewey. He didn't really intend to do that but said it only to "scare Lepke into giving me money." That's

what he told Weiss and Strauss when they caught up with him.

Lepke heard Allie Tennenbaum testify from the stand that he, Lepke, had ordered Rosen's murder. That had been Lepke's other mistake. In all other instances either Gurrah or Anastasia had given orders to the gunmen who were to do the actual killing.

Lepke had never allowed himself to do that, and because of it he never could be tied in directly with the many murders he actually ordered. Joe Rosen was his downfall. A few hundred dollars would have spared him that. Irony? Lepke could taste it, right down to his guts.

Witness after witness took the stand and tied Lepke in with Rosen's murder, as neatly as if he were a department store package. The same witnesses tied in Mendy Weiss, Louis Capone, and Phil Strauss.

On Saturday, November 30, 1941, at a little after ten o'clock in the evening, the jury was handed the case. The trial had lasted three months. Over fifty witnesses had given almost five thousand pages of testimony. The jury deliberated past midnight.

The courtroom was filled with spectators who refused to leave until they had heard the verdict. Among them was Betty Wasserman Buchalter, Lepke's wife. An hour passed. No verdict. Two o'clock. Still no verdict. At two-thirty in the morning there was a knock on the jury room door, from within. There

was an immediate stirring among the spectators, and all eyes turned to the jury as they filed in.

The foreman of the jury was Charles E. Stevens, sales manager for an envelope company. He was ready to read the verdict. There was a timeless moment of utter silence and intensesness. Everyone knew that in the next moment words would come to destroy or continue a mob which had triumphed over a city and its life for two decades, a mob that had killed in a manner which even an Al Capone could not match for ruthlessness and viciousness.

The ticking of the clock on the wall was the only audible sound now as the packed courtroom waited for Stevens to speak. He spoke in a clear, firm voice.

"We find the defendants, and each of them, guilty of murder in the first degree, as charged."

A woman screamed. It was Betty Buchalter.

On Monday morning Mendy Weiss, Louis Capone, and Lepke Buchalter were back in court to hear their sentences.

Judge Taylor was stern-faced. He looked down on Lepke from the raised bar of justice, said, "Louis Buchalter, alias Lepke, for the murder of Joseph Rosen, whereof he is convicted, is hereby sentenced to the punishment of death. Within ten days from this date, subject to any legal impediments, the Sheriff of Kings County shall deliver the said Louis Buchalter to the Warden of

Sing Sing Prison, where he shall be kept in solitary confinement until the week beginning with Sunday, January 4, 1942, and upon some day within the week so appointed, the Warden of Sing Sing Prison shall do execution upon him, the said Louis Buchalter, alias Lepke, in the mode and manner prescribed by law."

Lepke gripped the rail, his face a little pale, a few beads of perspiration shining on his forehead. It was the first time in The Syndicate's long history that one of its top members had heard the death sentence pronounced over him. It shattered Lepke's murderous gang for all time. Louis Capone came after him, and then Mendy Weiss.

The appeal battle began immediately. Money was no object, and there was a ton of it to spend. Every trick in the legal bag was used. Five times the execution of the three hoods was postponed while lawyers fought to save them from the chair. During this time Moey Dimples was slain. It gave Lepke a lot of satisfaction but not enough.

On March 2, 1944, with a telephone line held open from the Warden's office in Sing Sing to the Executive Mansion in Albany, the three men were made ready for their executions. At 10:55 a last check was made. There was no change. No last minute reprieve. No miracles for Lepke. None for Capone or Weiss.

Louis Capone went first. He sat down in the chair without a word, his face blank. He was pronounced

dead at 11:05. Mendy Weiss, bull-like, a slight sneer on his coarse features, came in almost as soon as Capone's body was wheeled out. He was dead at 11:08.

And now came Louis Buchalter. His face was hard, the once soft eyes were filled with a hot hatred, and looking into them one could understand now how this man could kill and order killings without qualms or compunctions. He looked around the room briefly and wordlessly, and then he strode with quick steps toward the chair. For two years and three months he had fought to save himself from this moment, fought harder than any one of his victims might have fought to save their own lives. Like each of his victims he, too, had lost.

He was fastened into the chair with efficient swiftness. Warden Snyder dropped his hand, and Joseph Francel, the official executioner, threw the switch. That was the end of the road.

Jake "Gurrah" Shapiro died in prison, a shrunken, sickly shadow of himself, alone and unmourned.

Several years later the Syndicate decided to get rid of Albert Anastasia. He was slain as he sat in a barber chair in the Park Central Hotel by two gunmen who walked in calmly, pointed their pistols at his head and chest and fired. He had spilled men's blood a-plenty. Now his own was soiling the marble-tiled floor.

How else could it end?

TOO MANY ACCIDENTS

She was a loyal, loving little wife. She knew she had everything a woman wants. But one little thing she didn't know. Soon she was going to die!

by

MORRIS HERSHMAN



JOE AMRON knew it was happening, but couldn't do anything about it. That was what made him unhappy.

He was a successful estate lawyer who didn't spend too much time in the "shop", as he called a courtroom. He got along nicely with most of his "foremen", the judges before whom he worked. He and his wife and two children lived in a white brick house with a lush garden behind it. The Amrons had many friends, among them the Newells. It was Frank Newell who was causing trouble.

Newell was a happy, hearty extrovert type with perfect digestion and a stomach as flat as a board. He did the talking while his moonfaced wife sat silently and smiled at him or agreed with a nod that her husband was right about whatever it was he happened to be saying at the time.

They were a nice couple in every sense of the word.

But it might be that his wife's continual admiration was too much for Frank Newell. He started looking around at other women, making a play for any that he fancied at first.

It was when he grew a little more secretive and started to drink that Joe Amron knew Frank had found somebody.

As he and Frank were close friends, Joe knew, too, that the affair was a long-time proposition. When it had lasted for a year, Joe's wife told him that Sophie had tearfully refused to give Frank a divorce.

It was shortly afterwards that the murder attempts started.

Amron discovered the first one when he went to the Newell house on a July afternoon to pick Frank up for some golf. Frank was tampering with the small car that Sophie used. He looked up, embarrassed.

"Be right with you," he said. For once his voice rasped like a rusty blade against the chin.

Amron, sitting behind the wheel of his own car, folded his hands tautly. Silence nibbled at his nerves.

"We'd better hurry if we want to make time," he said.

As it happened, Sophie Newell sent one of the servants to do the shopping later that afternoon. The servant was killed in the accident that followed, and her family collected some money from Frank for having maintained dangerous working conditions. To cap the climax, Sophie was so frightened by the accident that she refused to drive for months afterwards.

It was at a picnic for the Amrons

and the Newells that the next attempt was made. Sophie was the only one of the four who liked tuna fish sandwiches and Frank had insisted, she said, on preparing some of the food. Frank looked restless and irritable. His thumbnails clicked together as fast as cable code while he watched Sophie take a bite from one of the sandwiches. She promptly spat it out.

"It must've grown moldy in the can," she said. "You wouldn't have noticed, dear. You've never taken to tuna fish."

Frank said irritably, "There's nothing wrong with it."

"I suppose you're right, dear," she said gently. "But I'd rather not have any."

She put it down to one side, where the Amrons' dog nibbled some of it. The dog died in convulsions a day later.

On the Tuesday following that incident, Amron had a lunch date with Frank Newell. Amron had just picked up some medicine from the drugstore for his wife, and so arrived a little later than usual. Newell, who was planning a trip by his private plane into New York City, was glancing at his watch.

"Have to pick up some things for business," he said, adding with overdone casualness, "and a gun, while I'm at it. I need a good rifle."

"To protect yourself?" Amron

asked, no sympathy in his voice at all.

"Sort of. Sophie gets worried sometimes about how safe we are."

"You mean about how safe she is." Amron looked levelly at Frank Newell. "I'd hate to see an accident happen to her."

"I can't prevent every accident," Newell blurted out and then put a hand over his mouth.

They finished the meal and then Newell left. Newell never returned from that trip. His plane crashed over Northwestern Colorado. The funeral was well-attended. Sophie, of course, was the chief mourner.

She came to his office in a couple of days to sign probate papers. She wore black, and moved slowly.

After the papers had been signed, Amron said, "You'll get over the shock in time, Sophie."

"That's what I've been told," she said dully, "but I loved him."

Amron was upset. Perhaps he was bothered by what he alone knew as well as the fact that he and his wife had been in a savage argument.

He said, "It would be damn nice if Frank had felt the same way."

Sophie Newell froze. Slowly she stood up, reached for the probate papers and tore them furiously across the middle, and threw them on his desk.

"That should teach you not to make any nasty remarks about my Frank," she said. "I'm going to go to another lawyer to take care of the estate matters. Good-by."

She stalked out of the office. Joe Amron sighed. He had lost what might have been a very good fee. But he didn't for a moment regret having put a couple of his wife's sleeping pills into Frank Newell's coffee during their last meal together.

But he had lost out on a juicy fee and he supposed it was justice of a sort. He'd never be able to explain it to his wife and there'd probably be another argument about that.

Joe Amron sighed and arranged to spend a night on the town. His girl friend was good looking and didn't make any impossible demands on him.

Coming Soon:

Another TRUE CRIME STORY masterpiece

LUCKY LUCIANO: THE MURDEROUS GANGSTER

by DAVID MAZROFF

THE PANDORA PLAN

*"Good night, my dear," the man said
to the sleeping girl. The woman beside
him nodded. And may you rot in hell,
she thought grimly. It is high time.*

by JACK WEBB

GOOD MORNING, Mr. Torres," said the custodian of the ledger at the door.

"Morning, Giles," Michael Torres said.

He headed across the foyer to the formal door of the grill with a haste that seemed inordinate to Giles, who also noticed that Torres was limping. At the Erasmus, however, one does not remark upon such things. Not unless one is remarked to first.

At the bar, Torres said, "Let me have a jigger of gin, Jules. One-hundred proof."

"Yes, Mr. Torres." If there was a question behind Jules' placid glance, it remained there. He poured the drink.

Torres picked it up.

"Back shortly," he said. He

carried the squat glass into the rest room with him. At this hour, it was blessedly empty. Putting his foot onto the marble that surrounded the pair of basins, he gently pulled up a trouser leg and removed the knotted handkerchief that contained the wound. It was small and clean and the bullet had passed through the calf.

Torres applied the raw gin. He dabbed it on both sides of his calf. He felt like a damned fool and the sudden bursts of pain were a just reward for the idiocy of this accident. More gin, and he bound his leg carefully with strips from one of the neatly folded linen towels beside the basin. He threw the remaining threads and his handkerchief into the toilet and flushed it. Nothing



untoward should ever be left in the restroom of the men's grill.

Returning to the bar, Michael Torres gave the empty glass to Jules.

"A vital ounce," he explained. "And now, I think it is after eleven."

Jules expert hands went to work, fluidly, automatically. He delivered

the essence of icicles and the points of diamonds all in a single fountain.

"There's a first aid kit in my room," he said, "and a needle and thread. You're quite welcome to the key, sir."

Harrison stood at Torres' shoulder.

"Let's take a booth," he said. And to Jules, "Vodka martini on the rocks."

"Yes, Mr. Harrison," Jules said. His glance removed itself to some inward plane.

"Put it on my chit," Torres said, "and thank you, Jules."

"Thank you, sir." He delivered Harrison's cocktail.

Torres followed his companion to the corner booth, giving no favor to his stiffening leg.

"I hate that superior bastard," Harrison said, nodding toward the bar.

"He really is," Torres murmured. "The point is, Jim, that I shot a ninety-three at Arrondale yesterday afternoon and Herbie Johnson shot a ninety-one. Well above himself. Take that dogleg on the fourteenth."

"You take it," Harrison growled. "You haven't shot in the nineties since you were twelve. What are you trying to tell me?"

"Automontec's lasser control is so good it's going to result in a stock split."

"You're sure?"

"Torres shrugged.

"When?" Harrison demanded.

"Six to eight weeks. Board meets Tuesday next. Decision's up to them."

"I've got to get moving."

Harrison started to push his substantial bulk around the table.

Torres touched his wrist. "Admonsén and Eichman have a block of thirty thousand shares.

They got hurt on Automontec's black box development a year and a half ago. They're suspicious of the lasser. You can have it at forty-two if you take the lot."

Harrison studied Torres suspiciously.

"Like you read my mind," he said, "You begin to scare me. And how would you know about Admonsén and Eichman? I haven't heard a flutter. I hear a lot."

"Last weekend," Torres said, "I was on Phil Eichman's boat off Puerto Villarta when he took a nine-foot sail on a nine-thread line. There was considerable celebrating before we hit the predawn syndrome."

"What in hell," Harrison demanded, "is the predawn syndrome?"

Torres grinned. "A trade secret, Jim. A moment of truth. Most often, there's money or sex involved. It depends on the fellow's particular failing at the moment. It comes on the downhill skid from elation. Self doubts feed on gin, bourbon or scotch, according to taste. It's a cyclic thing; you could almost plot it on a computer."

"You mean Eichman was drunk?"

"You're damned right he was."

"I'll just look into that stock," Harrison said.

Torres leaned forward. "Act on your information, Jim. Forget the source unless you want to recommend my services, and that doesn't include your two-bit gin rummy investors."

"Sure, Mike, Sure." Harrison pushed away from the table and hurried toward the door.

Michael Torres watched the departing back thoughtfully. Harrison would pay and continue to pay, right up to his coronary. Harrison wasn't very bright, but too smart to be stupid, and greedy. Boy, he was greedy!

Returning to the bar, Torres flexed his arms unconsciously, bringing his fingers together.

"Here's the church," he said to Jules, "and here's the steeple——"

"Yes, sir. Another cocktail, Mr. Torres?"

"By all means, Jules. It promises to be a sticky day."

"Does it, sir? I haven't been outside."

Jules delivered the cocktail. In the mirror behind the bar, Torres watched something of a commotion at the entrance to the grill. Giles, the clerk at the desk, was fluttering around a giant of a man about as effectively as a butterfly.

Torres finished his drink and strolled toward the door.

"It's all right, Giles," he said to the door clerk.

"I told him I'd have you paged, Mr. Torres."

"Fats doesn't believe in amenities," Torres said. "Do you, Fats?"

"Solly wants to see you."

"I rather thought he would."

They went out the front door together.

"This time," Fats said grinning, "you're in trouble. The boss don't like nobody to fool with Marcie. And you know what? I've asked for your ticket."

"You scare me to death," Torres said. He climbed into the arrogant car in the passenger zone.

Fats gunned away from the curb, skittering an impulsive Volkswagon out of the way.

"Cool customer," Fats said with satisfaction. "I'm going to break that cool, Buster."

"I'm sure you are," Torres said softly.

The car swung off Sixth and into Spring. It went down half a block and into an underground garage. The corner office on the eleventh floor had a golden lawn deep enough for flowers to bloom. The desk was a long way from the door Fats closed behind the two of them who had entered. "I brought the pigeon," Fats said to Solly. Then he stopped talking altogether. Torres' pivoting swing caught him full in the belly. As he doubled forward, Torres right hand cracked across the base of his skull even as a knee caught the falling man on the chin.

Torres limped toward the small man behind the desk, brushing off his hands.

"Put away your gun, Solly," he said. "Fats said he had asked for my ticket. I just tore the stub. You should never have brought him around the corner from Main Street. He lacks the proper manners."

"You also hit Marcie," Solly said. "That makes me mad, Mike." The gun remained pointed at Torres' middle.

"She shot me with her damned cap pistol," Torres said. "I had to knock it out of her."

"Why were you bothering Marcie?"

"Because she's a damned fool. You wanted some information on Synchronund and I furnished it. Next thing I hear, Marcie's running around buying up stock."

"So she's smart. So she wants to make a little money."

"Or you're dumb," Torres said. "What kind of a deal do you want to make when you've got her listed as 'Assistant Secretary-Treasurer' for Dynodisc and Artefilm?"

"I didn't think about that," Solly said. He laid down the gun.

"Sure you didn't," Torres said. "Or did you think up the idiot trick to save yourself some money before you make the offer of tender for Synchronund? It's a sick company, Solly, but not so sick it couldn't take a healthy jump if the news got around."

"No, Mike, I didn't. I swear!" Solly found a handkerchief and wiped his cherub face.

"I thought you were smarter than that," Torres admitted. "That's why I went to see Marcie."

"Why not me, Mike?"

Torres sat down, crossing his left leg gently over his right knee. Behind him, Fats moaned softly.

"The punk carrying a gun?" I asked him.

Solly shook his head. "Answer my question, Mike."

"Because I wanted to see what else she was up to. Marcie has a hundred grand tucked away in Seashore Federal under what she chooses to call her maiden name. That's cash on the block, Solly. God knows what she has in mutual funds, although I'm beginning to have a fair idea."

"The little bitch!"

Torres shook his head. "I doubt if she's little at all. I suspect she's so big that if you touch her, physically, by threats, violence, anything like that, you might be in for more trouble than even you can handle. If you even show your hand, you might be in for a shock. What you can do and how you do it is damned important. You still have any of your auditors from ten years ago, somebody that's kept up with you enroute?"

"Sammy Arronson," Solly said.

"It takes a crook," Torres said without smiling. "Now listen to me, Solly, and listen carefully. Put Sammy on this and don't tell him you suspect Marcie. Just tell him you smell something rotten. Leave the field wide open. Management and promotional fees, either dummy or kickbacks.

"Look into nonexistent employees on the payroll, or nonexistent overtime for actual employees; Dynodisc records, cutrate and remainder sales, to whom, for



how much; even a dummy corporation which has been billing you as a supplier of goods or services. Inventory of Artefilms in stock and on the road, security of the master prints; check your mail order blind drops; check the prime customers for your blue stuff; look at your export-import business, particularly inventories of the things from Denmark, or anything where your records have to be vague or fictional. Big, small, anything at all, cash reserve drains, allocated funds, capital expenditures, investments. The works. How long has Marcie had signatory authority?"

"Nineteen-sixty-two, sixty-three, I'm not sure. My God, Mike!" Solly was wiping his face. "I'll kill the bitch!"

Torres shook his head. "You wouldn't get a nickel back. Sammy, Solly. Use Sammy, and keep in touch." Torres stood up, favoring his left leg. "My percentage is the better route. Little like jewel theft insurance. Expensive, but cheaper and a whole lot less risky."

"Sure, Mike."

Torres pulled up his left trouser leg to expose the improvised bandage.

"Another quarter of an inch," he said, "and I'd be on crutches."

"You should see a doctor, as quickly as possible."

"So should your punk," Torres said. "Never use muscle on me, Solly. Just pick up the phone. That's all. Ever."

Fats was sitting up, holding his broken face between his hands. He had made rather a mess on the golden carpet. His dull gaze hated Michael Torres.

Outside the building on Spring Street, Torres caught a cab.

"Biltmore Hotel," he said to the driver. Normally he would have walked. Not today.

In the handsome lobby off Olive, the woman rose from one of the chairs beneath handcarved symbols of another age and came forward, holding out both hands. "Your limp becomes you, Mike."

"I ought to ring your neck," Torres said.

"You said it had to be authentic," Marcie said. "What about Solly?"

"Leaping like a hooked fish."

She took his arm. They went around the bend to the great old grill, larger than the one at the Erasmus, as elegant. Neither of them spoke until he had ordered. Then Marcie said, "I am sorry. You are hurting."

"Let me think," Torres said. "There is something. One thing more. It's important."

She watched him, softness in smoky eyes that were seldom soft. No longer pretty, Marcie Grant had the style of one of the smooth, controlled mountain cats. Men looked at her and calculated their own worth. No one took her for an easy make, not even a two-o'clock drunk.

"I've got it!" He smiled suddenly, and she smiled with his unexpected expression.

Marcie waited.

"Synchrosund," Mike said. "What's it going for today?"

"Twelve and a quarter this morning. God knows what at this moment. Not up."

"I have to make a phone call," he said. "Solly doesn't know where you are, does he?"

Marcie shrugged.

"If you wear out a drink——" Torres suggested.

"I've worn out more than one waiting for you, Michael Torres."

She watched him go. Two alley cats, she thought, Mike and me. Well fed, though, and certainly well groomed.

The man who stood at the corner

of the booth said, "Solly wants to see you."

Marcie looked up.

"I'll just finish my drink," she said to Joey. Joey was a little man, smaller than Solly. Joey had trained horses when he was young. He walked with a limp more permanent than Mike's.

"Now," he said softly.

"You touch me," Marcie said without a change of expression, "and I'll scream. Pressure point or switchblade and you'll be a guest of Chief Reddin. And I'll talk, Joey, talk enough to put Solly down the largest gutter spout you ever saw."

Joey stood there, making up his dangerous little mind.

"You better come," Joey said.

Marcie said, "In June of sixty-five, you filled the bilge of the *Marcie II* with Mexican rum off Guaymas. Solly and I had a party aboard. I took a lot of movies, including you loading cargo, Joey."

"It makes no difference."

"Get lost, punk." Torres stood at the left shoulder of the little man.

Joey swung, hands in jacket pockets. Torres reached forward, caught the edges of the pockets and tore them downward. The hands hung there surprised, one holding a closed switchknife, one holding a .25 caliber automatic.

"You're almost naked," Mike Torres said. "Now what are you going to do, Joey?" He slid into the booth opposite Marcie. "You have the most surprising friends," he said.

"Table hopper," Marcie murmured.

Then there was hotel security, quick, quiet and Joey was on his way. One of the men didn't leave. Big, florid Mike made room for him to join them in the booth.

"What's up, Mike?" the big man inquired.

"One of Solly's boys," Mike said. "He was issuing an invitation. I made it public."

"This is a nice place," the big man said, "a quiet place."

"Solly's boys lack manners," Torres said. "An hour ago one of them broke into the Erasmus to pick me up. You know Fats?"

"That slob?"

"He took me up to see Solly. Solly has an acre of gold carpet, twenty dollars a square yard kind. I left Fats bleeding all over it. You've just done me a big favor, Al, dragging Joey away. How long before he gets to a phone?"

"How long do you need?"

"Twenty minutes, thirty. You want to do me another favor?"

"Mike," Al Schwartz said, "you're a problem. What's this going to cost me?"

"Nothing." Torres put his hands on the table top. "I want Marcie to go out of here through the back door. I want her to go in a florist's van, a plumber's van, an electrician's van. I don't give a damn. The important thing is they deliver her to one of the rent-a-car agencies at least a mile from here."

"Well now," Schwartz said, "that may take a little padding."

Torres removed his hands from the edge of the table. He reached down to retrieve his napkin.

"What's touching your knee," he said, "is five twenties. Use enough to make it reliable. Use the rest to buy cigars. Now, let me have a few minutes with Marcie."

Schwartz got up, fumbling with his jacket and trousers. "You're an easy man to get along with, Mike, that is, when you don't catch us unexpected."

"Sorry about that," Torres said.

Marcie said evenly, "You buy 'em all, don't you Mike?"

Torres shook his head. "In a place like this, you buy nothing. Joey broke all the laws there are, coming in here with a shiv and a gun. All I bought was a few extra minutes and a way out for you. If you want to live to collect your annuities and dividends, you're going to disappear in the next twenty minutes. Al's going to help us arrange that.

"Can you get it through your thick and lively head that if you're not out of sight in the next hour, you're dead? Absolutely and completely dead. How much money do you have on you at the moment?"

"Fifty, a hundred. I can cash a check."

Torres shook his head. "No you can't! Banks are the easiest leaks in the world if you know how to get to them. Solly does." He opened his wallet and almost emptied it.

"Five hundred bucks," he said. "Here's my car rental card. Now, you drive north along the coast. Settle for Santa Maria or move inland to Paso Robles if you want it a little warmer and drier. Buy the clothes you need, the nightie you need, anything else, for cash and after you leave here. But don't stop short of Santa Barbara and don't charge anything."

Marcie reached out and touched his hand, "You're running scared, Mike?"

Torres' cool grey glance appraised her, a neat, frosted brunette, half icicle, half volcano.

"Don't be a fool," he said quietly. "There are some odds and ends to clean up. I want you alive when I come around to collect. It's as simple as that. Solly's retrogressing. The ape is replacing the man. You get the hell out of here. Send me a wire. Something about Anodyne stocks. Sign it Pandora. I'll get in touch as soon as the shooting's over."

"Like that?" She pressed his fingers.

"You know Solly," Torres said.

Schwartz returned to the table.

"I can take care of the lady," he said.

"Hustle her out," Mike Torres said. "Nothing gentle. Through a service door where you can't be followed."

Al Schwartz didn't even pause. "Will you please come with me, Miss?" The big man had her elbow.

"Thanks loads," Marcie shot over her shoulder.

Torres watched her jet-propelled exit without smiling. It had to work. Just as he had to trust her.

He took time then to order lunch. He needed time. A marked and carefully calculated amount. If Joey had a backup man in the grill, he couldn't spot him. After lunch, he found a phone again and made two calls. On the second, Solly Golman was jumping.

Torres said. "I told you not to use muscle."

He listened.

"Particularly on Marcie," he said. Now you've got them both picked up."

More sputtering.

"How the hell do I know what for?" Mike demanded. "You stirred the pot. I gave Joey away. I told you I would. I told you to stop using your goddamned muscle."

Torres paused and then interrupted again. "In case you're interested, somebody's just picked up two thousand shares of Synchrosund... How the hell do I know, the way you've been tipping your stupid hand?"

He listened some more.

"Arrange to buy it back. It can be had at ten," he said.

"No," Torres said when he could interrupt Solly. "You stay out of it. Show your hand and the bastard will raise his ante. I know him. He bought at eight and a half. Offer ten through a blind pig, and you've got it. Push and you've got problems."

Torres listened some more.

Finally, he said, "I'm getting tired of you, Solly. Get that Synchronund stock and I'll talk to you tomorrow." He cradled the phone.

Beginning even an hour ago, Torres thought, Sammy Arronson should be finding at least one account to bring to Solly's attention. Then, there was Jim Harrison dutifully buying Synchronund, and finally there was Marcie going off with the hotel's protection. Solly should be in quite a state . . . Enough to make a contract on him?

Torres made the church and the steeple, opened his fingers to count the people. With Fats and Joey out of the picture, Solly was out of errand boys.

So we'll take pot luck, he decided. He left the booth, walking with something of an effort. That was a damned fool stunt he and Marcie had pulled. Solly said he should see a doctor. Well, Solly would have had second thoughts about that.

He left the hotel and turned left on Sixth Street, beside the solid rows of traffic. There was one thing about downtown Los Angeles, you sure as hell couldn't pull a hit and run from a careening car.

There was an officer at the next corner, directing traffic.

"Hello, friend," Mike Torres said.

The light changed and he moved on across the street. A block south on Hill he went into a theatre, paying no attention to the signs on the marquee nor the pictures in the



showcase windows of the foyer. He sat in the dark, his hurt leg stretched out before him. He sat there for an hour and a half, making no sense of the super color or the super hero whose incredibly silly antics were filmed against murky, authentic foreign backgrounds like an inter-terminal series of sets for *Hamlet*.

It was nearly four when he came out of the theatre. He caught a cab at the corner.

"The Erasmus Club," he said to the driver.

On the north side of the main entrance to the Erasmus was *Dunder's Tobaccos*. Down the narrow aisle, the far door led into the club. Torres said to the gentleman behind the counter, "Jake, I want to use your phone. Your own."

"Certainly," Jake Dunder said.

Mike Torres shut the door in the cubbyhole behind him. The small office was like being closed in a special kind of spice cabinet—rich, compelling, unbelievably masculine. Here was the perfume of three centuries. The desk had pigeon holes and a roll top? It was older than Jake Dunder.

Torres found the number of the treasury department.

"Intelligence division," Mike Torres said to the impersonal voice at the other end. Then, he asked for John Fielding. He talked for five minutes, grinning briefly over the objections. Afterwards, he called *Rosie's*. The voice that answered obviously wasn't Rosie. Torres asked for Gallagher. Gallagher was certain he could go in with the cleaning service.

Out of the cubbyhole, he visited with Jake. They talked about briar and grain and the nasty tars of certain aromatic blends. He settled for a bullbitch with a gracefully curved, stubby stem and a bowl big enough to tamp with your thumb. He looked forward to having time to break it in, given the next hour or two.

Then, he went into the club. Giles came to him from the desk. "There's a gentleman waiting to see you."

"I rather thought there might be," Mike Torres said. He followed Giles' glance.

Solly came from one of the chairs in the off-lobby, letting the news-

paper fall unnoticed as he rose. It was amazing, Torres thought, that such expensive tailoring could appear so shabby. It was also, he knew, a warning of a pathetic and desperate kind.

"I want to talk to you, Mike." His voice was like a tight, dark bird, a crow flying home.

"Sure," Torres agreed. "The bar's quiet now." He led the way, feeling a cold spot in his back, the dead cold spot of Solly's stare. The took the same booth he had occupied with Harrison a million hours ago.

Mike Torres said, "I expected someone, not necessarily you."

"You took care of that." Solly's voice was bitter.

The waiter hovered unobtrusively before them.

Torres ordered. He reached into an inside breast pocket. Solly tightened.

"Handkerchief," Torres said.

Solly said. "You ruined Fats. Joey's on ice. Marcie's disappeared. Your friend Harrison is buying Synchrosund. Why, Mike?"

"Sammy Arronson. What does he tell you?"

"He ain't had time to go the route," Solly said. "Lot's of funny stuff. Money out, money in, moved around. Maybe Marcie. But nothing's missing. Nothing yet."

The waiter brought their drinks and went away. Torres drank. "Marcie's a millionaire. You got that figured."

Whatever was going on behind



Solly's eyes, Mike Torres could almost see it regroup. "You found out. That's why she shot you."

Torres grinned. "She shot me because I told her to."

Solly shook his head like a swimmer, surfacing.

"On your money, Solly, I made her a millionaire. Nothing you can

touch, ever. Afterwards, we had to get back to you. You had to believe me. You weren't supposed to know I had stolen your girl."

"You've got a big mouth," Solly said. In the comfortable twilight of the grill, a small blunt muzzle peeked over the table top. "Go on talking."

"Sure," Torres said. "On the eleventh floor of the Carmody building some treasury people are showing up. Income tax evasion report by an informer. To help the action, there's going to be a fire, smoky, stinking and Sammy Arronson's in there surrounded by more of your books than have been in one place in the last ten years. Right there, available to the rescue work."

The two guns went off together—the one peeking over the edge of the table and the one in Mike Torres' hand, completely under the table top. It was an unpardonable amount of action and noise, particularly for the Erasmus Club. Solly Golman was dead before the polite shock of those present galvanized into something more.

Torres held a napkin to his left shoulder, swearing softly.

"I regret my timing was off," he said to the waiter. "Otherwise there would have been half the noise."

MICHAEL TORRES said, "Of course it was self defense. The little bastard had a gun pointing at me across the table. That sort of thing makes me nervous."

The police didn't quite believe

him—but he did have a permit to carry a gun—and what with it being in the Erasmus Club . . .

Fielding was friendlier when he came to the hospital. As he pointed out to Torres, "It's not often you can get firemen to carry out ten years of records and dump them in the hall. You can take a hell of a lot of pictures in twenty minutes."

"Good for the treasury department," Mike Torres said. He closed his eyes and relaxed.

"Oh no you don't!" Fielding snapped. "What's your angle, Mike?"

Torres sighed. "I wanted Golman's business buried when I was through with it. It was a filthy conglomeration. Filthy pictures, filthy books, art theatre and news-stand distributorships. Getting close to the legitimate with all these recent rulings. Almost untouchable."

"Dear Abbey," Fielding said.

Torres' four-letter word was explicit.

"Solly made a lot of money," he said. "A friend of mine made some use of it. If we wanted to live to enjoy it, Golman had to be wrecked."

"So you shot him," Fielding said.

"In self defense."

"Brother!" said the intelligence division man.

He left the hospital then. There were all those records waiting.

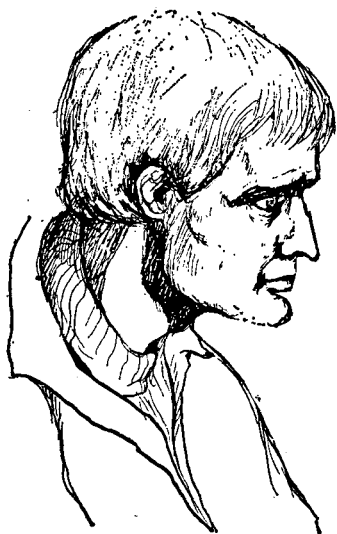
The telegram signed "Pandora" came from Paso Robles. Mike Torres remembered the delightful inn. In spite of a couple of wounds, he wished he could go. Still, there were certain politic reasons not to leave town.

The wire he sent in return read simply, "*Pandora, come home.*"

Before he went to sleep, Mike Torres reviewed the whole thing. Over all, it had worked very well. Since 1963, when Marcie had been made a financial officer in Solly's companies, it had been all so damned simple. Dummy billings-dummy rebates. Not a penny stolen. Thousands of dollars on loan, himself to invest them when there was a chance to pick up a bundle—all short term capital gains, of course.

Now there was a million dollars. Even with a woman like Marcie, it would take a long time spending. And with himself around, they might even get rich.

Tonight, however, he dreamed of the West Indies—and a long lonely, sun-strewn beach.



SYMPATHY

**He was taunting me, daring
me, and I couldn't do a
thing. For he was—dead!**

by GIL BREWER

SERGEANT KELLER was at the long desk on the first floor of the police building when he saw this obvious bum come up the steps from the front door at the end of the hall.

Keller was tall, heavily built, his uniform immaculate. The sight of a bum always troubled him, even when innocent of any crime. He hated seeing a man gone to seed.

The bum was poised hesitantly at the top of the stairs, like a delapidated scarecrow. He was so thin he was practically a wraith, with sagging, too-big trousers, broken shoes, a filthy shirt open in front.

He carried a torn, dirty, ragged tweed jacket. His fingernails were black halfmoons. He needed a shave badly, his cheeks were sunken, and even from this distance, Keller worked jaw muscles over the sight of rotten teeth.

The bum's hair was mostly gray, months uncut.

Boneby came out of the office, stepped over beside Keller, spotted the bum.

"What's that?" Boneby said.

"I have no idea."

"These bums," Boneby said. "I can't—"

"Wait," Keller said. "Jeez. Look at those eyes."

The bum was moving jerkily down the hall, toward the desk.

"Look at those eyes," Keller said.

The bum's eyes were something to see. They were like two hamburger buns, with ketchup poured over them. They were swollen to bursting. Then you could see the pale blue, the extra circle of white around the iris.

The bum reached the desk, teetering, one filthy hand poking at the air. He gently laid the hand atop the desk.

Keller eyed the hand distastefully. He didn't want that hand touching the desk. It looked ready to rot off.

Boneby gave a short laugh and poked Keller in the ribs. "You're on the desk tonight, Harv. Haw, haw." He vanished swiftly back inside the office.

Keller faced the bum. "Well?" he said.

"You can probably take care of me," the bum said. He had a voice like rats rustling among dry newspapers. He coughed lightly. "Something important to tell you. Damned important." He coughed again, slightly louder this time.

"Would you mind turning your head when you cough?" Keller asked.

"Sorry," the bum said, blinking.

"Well," Keller asked him. "What

is it? What's all the noise about?"

"I came to report a murder," said the bum. His eyes took on a certain sadness. "The murder of a long dear friend."

"Oh?"

"True," the bum said. He eyed Keller closely, gathered the front of the jacket together with a flourish, and made an effort to stand straighter. The action was ludicrous. It also looked painful. He stifled a cough that gurgled in his throat. "Very true," the bum said again.

"Look," Keller said. "We can give you a flop for the night. You don't have to come on this strong."

"You don't believe me?"

"Maybe I do, maybe I don't. Tell me about it."

The bum smiled, revealing yellowed tusks, red gums.

"That's what I came for," he said. "To tell you all about it."

"Where's the body?"

"Let me tell it my way," the bum said.

"Okay, okay," Keller said. He picked up a pencil, began banging it lightly on the desk top. "It better be good."

"He wanted to die," the bum said. "He had nothing left to live for. Once he had a great deal to live for. But not any more. He tried so damned hard, you know, officer, but nothing worked out. It all turned to ashes."

Keller breathed carefully. The bum's eyes were watering now, and a dampness showed on his upper lip.

"You could at least give me his name?" Keller asked.

"Oh, yes. Yes. James Ditweiler. That's his name, all right."

Keller wrote that down on the pad.

"What else?" Keller said.

"There isn't an awful lot else," the bum said, "True, there seemed to be, when I came in here. I was

Then he began coughing again, head turned away now, his head jerking, the cough coming from down deep. Finally it subsided. He teetered in front of the desk.

"James Ditweiler," the bum said. "He was a doctor once—an MD. Would you believe it?"

"I'd believe anything tonight," Keller said.

"He started on morphine," the bum said. "One thing led to another, I guess. He was my closest pal. The

Complete in the Next Issue:

TUTORED TO DEATH

A New Lieutenant Joseph Marcus Novelet

by FLETCHER FLORA

In his life she had been unfaithful, in his death she had laughed at those who said she had killed the rich old cuckold. For there were positively no clues, and dead men tell no tales. No tales? Well, how about that little matter of the....

thinking all along the street, and there seemed to be a lot to tell. But now there doesn't seem to be so much. Funny thing."

"Yeah," Keller said. "It's a scream."

The bum's eyes were watering. Eddies ran down his cheeks, furrowing the dirt among the whiskers. The eyes were so bloodshot it was terrible to consider his awful state.

only real pal I ever had, matter of fact. He was married once, too, a pretty girl. Lost her, along with everything else in his world," he said sadly.

The bum shook his head, rubbed his hand across his chest, coughed lightly as he teetered in front of Keller's desk.

"Where's the body?" Keller asked.

"I'll tell you that," the bum said.

"What makes you think he was murdered?"

"Oh, he was murdered, all right."

"Yes. But what makes you so sure. You see it happen?"

"That's right."

"When did it happen?"

"About ten minutes ago."

"Where?"

"Down the street. What does it matter? Old Ditweiler's gone, now. Gone for good. He had everything once. You've got to understand that. He was kind, a real gentleman, of the old school type. You know what I mean?"

"Sure, sure."

"It's just funny."

"What's funny?"

"It was so important I tell you about him, tell somebody. And there was so much to tell. A whole lifetime. And listen—he never had nothing but kind thoughts. He was good to animals. He was—"

The bum's voice began to peter off, then he started coughing again. It was very bad this time, and a long string of slaver spun from his lips. He wiped it away, blinking terribly at Keller.

"Are you drunk?" Keller asked.

"It's hard to tell."

"Not exactly," the bum said.

"Not what you'd really call drunk."

He paused. "It's so damned funny. There was so much to tell."

He began to sob slightly, then, his head bobbing and jerking. "Just think, the things he had once—the whole world. And now—now all he's got is a belly full of strychnine. Full of fire, you might say."

"All right," Keller said. "Enough of this. I've played along with you long—"

"There should be more to tell!" the bum yelled. "Can't you understand? There should be more to tell, but there isn't. That's all there is."

"Yeah, yeah," Keller said. "Steady. What's your name?"

"James Ditweiler," the bum said. "And I'm dead standing here. Dead right in front of you. Understand? Enough strychnine to knock off a block."

"But you said—"

"I am he, officer. That's all there is to it, and nothing more to say."

Keller stared as the bum sank to the floor, clutching the desk, his lips frothing.

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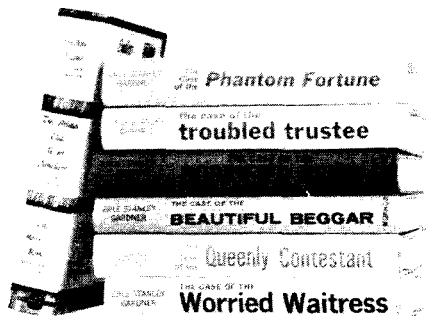
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